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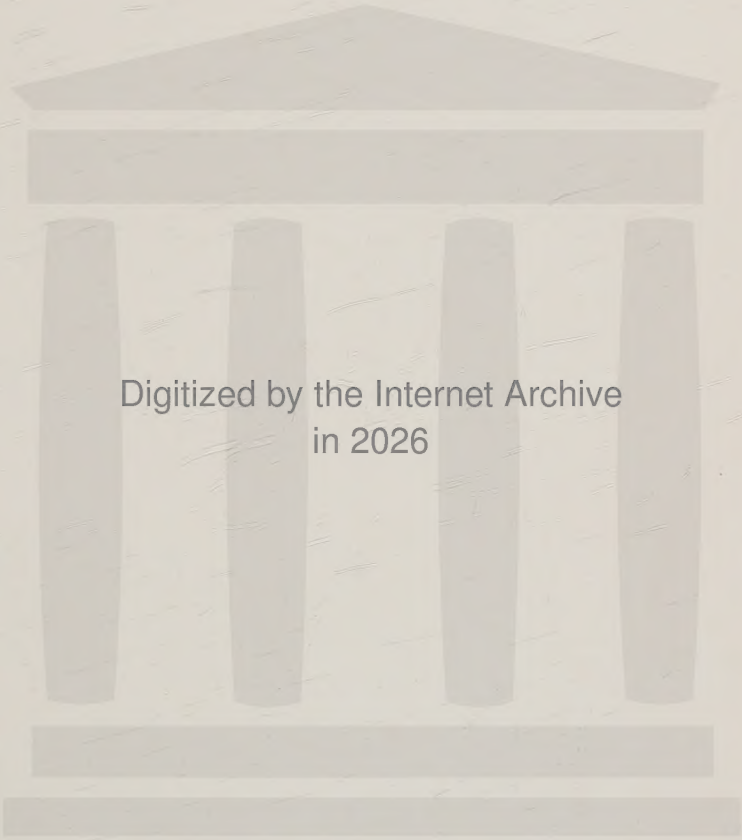
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WASHINGTON'S RECEPTION ON THE BRIDGE AT TRENTON

From an engraving by Gimber

PRESIDENTIAL YEARS

1787–1860

By

MEADE MINNIGERODE

With 24 Illustrations

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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PRESIDENTIAL YEARS

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For

THOMAS BEER

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The New Roof—1787–1789	1
The President by Three Votes—1796	33
The Mammoth of Democracy—1800	77
The Friends of General Jackson—1824 and 1828	123
The Singing Whigs—1840	175
The Dark Horse—1844	207
The Compromisers—1848 and 1852	255
The Buchaneers—1856	297
The Black Republicans—1860	337
Bibliography	391

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

WASHINGTON'S RECEPTION ON THE BRIDGE AT TRENTON *Frontispiece*
From an engraving by Gimber.

GENERAL WASHINGTON 14
From an old print.

GEORGE WASHINGTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 26
From a print published in 1796.

JOHN ADAMS 42
From an engraving by Buttre.

THOMAS JEFFERSON 64
From an engraving by Hall.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON 88
From the Talleyrand miniature.

TIMOTHY PICKERING 112
From an engraving by Welch.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS 130
From an engraving by Longacre.

"HERE'S TO YOU HARRY CLAY" 152
From the cover of an old song.

GENERAL ANDREW JACKSON, 1828 168
From an engraving by Childs.

GENERAL WM. H. HARRISON 186
From an old print.

FACING PAGE

THE LOG CABIN WALTZ 200
From the cover of an old musical composition.

JOHN TYLER 212
From an engraving by Forrest.

JAMES K. POLK 232
From an engraving by Hall.

JOHN C. CALHOUN 248
From an old engraving.

THE RIO GRANDE QUICK MARCH 262
From the cover of an old musical composition.

DANIEL WEBSTER 278
From an etching by Johnson.

FRANKLIN PIERCE 292
From an engraving by Hartman.

JAMES BUCHANAN 306
From an engraving by Hall.

THE GREAT REPUBLICAN REFORM PARTY 318
From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection.

THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE RIGHT PLACE 330
From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection.

STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS 350

STORMING THE CASTLE 370
From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection.

THE NIGGER IN THE WOODPILE 384
From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection.

Presidential Years

The New Roof

1787–1789

THE NEW ROOF

1787–1789

1

THE people of the United States were extremely worried in 1787. Indeed, the term itself was comparatively new and consequently alarming, offensive in many cases to sectional prides and prejudices; so that in 1788 Patrick Henry was remarking that he

"would make this inquiry of those worthy characters who composed a part of the late Federal Convention. . . . Give me leave to demand, What right had they to say We, the people? My political curiosity, exclusive of my anxious solicitude for the public welfare, leads me to ask who authorized them to speak the language of We, the people, instead of We, the States?"

But aside from that, there was cause, in 1787, for breathless worriment. It was all on account of that same Federal Convention, sitting behind closed and guarded doors at Philadelphia, studying the question of a new form of government for the States in place

of the old Articles of Confederation. General Washington and Mr. Franklin, Mr. Madison, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Livingston, Roger Sherman, and Rufus King, and the others—that "assembly of demigods," as Mr. Jefferson called them. And they were preparing, so it was anxiously believed by many, to establish a monarchy and set up a King of America. The crown was to be—had already been, some said—offered to the young Bishop of Osnaburgh. Others insisted that it was the Prince of Prussia. Why, it was no secret in Connecticut that—

"A circular letter is handing about the country recommending a kingly government for these states. The writer proposes to send to England for the Bishop of Osnaburgh, second son to the King of Great Britain, and have him crowned KING over this continent. We have found by experience, says he, that we have not wit enough to govern ourselves—that all our declamations and parade about republicanism, liberty, property and the rights of man are mere stuff and nonsense, and that it is high time for us to tread back the wayward path we have walked in these twelve years. This plan, we"—the *Pennsylvania Gazette*—"are told, gains friends and partisans rapidly, and it surely is necessary for the great body of the people to be on their guard."

The Bishop of Osnaburgh—my eye and Betty Martin!

2

But the Federal Convention did not establish a monarchy, nor did it set up a King of America. Instead, it promulgated a Constitution and created a President of the United States. A moribund Congress at New York received these inventions without comment—one is almost tempted to say without interest—and forwarded them, in September, 1787, to the various States for their inspection. They were invited—all but Rhode Island which was sulking—to board "the Ship Constitution," to put on "the New Breeches" and take their places under "the New Roof," as men everywhere were soon saying; and when nine States should have ratified the new document it was to become effective.

And very soon "the public mind as well as my own," Patrick Henry found, "is extremely uneasy at the proposed change of government. . . . Liberty," Mr. Henry, who had reason to consider himself in a certain sense the curator of American liberty, exclaimed, "liberty, the greatest of all earthly blessings —give us that precious jewel and you may take everything else!" And there was not enough liberty, to his florid way of thinking, in the Constitution—that "Gilded Trap" of Antifederalist scorn, that "triple headed monster" with its House, its Senate and its Executive.

And in the hurly burly of ensuing State Conven-

tions, in the uproar of pamphlets, and squibs, and cards which accompanied them, Mr. Henry was not alone. When it was not *Centinel* addressing insulting remarks to *Laco, the pimp of Aristides,* it was *Brutus,* and *Cato,* and *Patriot,* rushing into the gazettes to save the nation, or rather the State; to answer that persistent *Publius* with his everlasting *Federalist* letters, and confound his anonymous partisan propaganda—for to their contemporaries the celebrated treatises on the Constitution of Mr. Hamilton, of Mr. Jay and of Mr. Madison were nothing more; to jab a quill at all the monarchist—the Bishop of Osnaburgh was not forgotten—aristocratic, Federalist "well-born."

Another new expression, this "well-born," gleaned from a clumsy and immediately misconstrued sentence in a book on American constitutions, written shortly before by John Adams. "The rich," Mr. Adams had observed, "the well-born and the able will acquire an influence among the people that will soon be too much for simple honesty and plain sense in a house of representatives," and they ought therefore to be segregated in a senate. Obviously, in the opinion of every Antifederalist, an attempt to establish an aristocratic American House of Lords, and the coffee houses rang with the "well-born" epithet, hooted in Federalist ears.

"Ye patriots of America," all good republicans were warned, "arouse from the dangerous infatuation in which ye are lulled, and while it is yet time strain every nerve to rescue your country from the servile yoke of bondage. . . . Suffer not, ye freemen of America, the well-born or their servile minions to usurp the sacred trust, to impose themselves upon you as your guardians."

It is not necessary here to enumerate the complicated, and frequently idiotic, objections to the new Federal Constitution, but to many patriots of 1788 the document and the system of government which it proclaimed were simply dreadful. Liberty was dead and foul despotism, of the British variety, rampant. The whole thing was a conspiracy on the part of the aristocrats against the hard won privileges of the freemen of America. For a country which had only recently announced the equality of all men, America was in a terrible sweat over aristocrats. They seemed, unaccountably, to persist. The preamble to the Declaration of Independence was all very well, but the Pennsylvania, the New England, the Virginia grandees were still there, in satin breeches and silver buckles. Mr. Jefferson had composed some resounding phrases about humanity, but the coaches of the aristocracy were still trundling through the streets, as they had in the days of the

British royal governors. There was a surviving permanence in birth, in heritage, in breeding, which mere preambles could not destroy. There was an excellence of manner, a superiority of mind which jealousy could only disparage. The "well-born." And their Constitution was a snare.

"There are certain seasons in the course of human affairs," *A Columbian Patriot* whose name was Elbridge Gerry declared, "when Genius, Virtue and Patriotism seem to nod over the vices of the times . . . or we should not see such a passive disposition prevail in some . . . while a supple multitude are paying a blind and idolatrous homage to the opinions of those who by the most precipitate steps are treading down their dear bought privileges; and who are endeavoring by all the arts of insinuation and influence to betray the people of the United States into an acceptance of a most complicated system of government; marked, on the one side, with the dark, secret and profound intrigues of the statesman, long practised in the purlieus of despotism; and, on the other, with the ideal projects of young ambition."

As for this government, it would commence, George Mason of Virginia insisted,

"in a moderate aristocracy; it is at present impossible to foresee whether it will, in its operation, produce a monarchy or a corrupt, oppressive aristocracy; it will most probably vibrate some years between the two and then terminate in the one or the other."

Patrick Henry—a theatrical old windbag, he seems to have been—foresaw even more dire emergencies. There would be a standing army "to execute the execrable commands of tyranny." And this Constitution was said to have beautiful features,

"but when I come to examine those features, Sir, they appear to me horribly frightful. Among other deformities it has an awful squinting; it squints towards monarchy. . . . Your President may easily become King. . . . If your American chief be a man of ambition and abilities, how easy is it for him to render himself absolute! The army is in his hands . . . and it will be the subject of long meditation with him to seize the first auspicious moment to accomplish his design. . . . If we make a King we may prescribe the rules by which he shall rule his people . . . but the President, in the field, at the head of his army, can prescribe the terms on which he shall reign master, so far that it will puzzle any American ever to get his neck from under the galling yoke. . . . Away with your President! We shall have a King, the army will salute him monarch . . . what will then become of you and your rights? Will not absolute despotism ensue?"

Whereupon "Mr. Henry strongly and pathetically expatiated on the probability of the President's enslaving America, and the horrid consequences that must result." It was these remarks, perhaps, which inspired a gentleman to observe in the *Pennsylvania*

Gazette that "in Pennsylvania and in Massachusetts . . . Antifederalism proceeds chiefly from ignorance, but in Virginia it originates in debt and vice; hence . . . in the latter state it prevails unfortunately among men of education and abilities." But they were mortally alarmed, in Virginia and everywhere else; King George and this new President of the United States—they were cut from the same scarlet, despotic cloth.

Even Mr. Hamilton, as industrious a Federalist as could be found, thought nothing of the Constitution. "Mine is an odd destiny," he told Gouverneur Morris. "Perhaps no man in the United States has sacrificed or done more for the present Constitution than myself; and contrary to all my anticipations of its fate, as you know from the very beginning, I am still laboring to prop the frail and worthless fabric." If he supported it, it was only because it was impossible to "deliberate between anarchy and convulsion on one side, and the chance of good to be expected from the plan on the other," and because the plan was "better than nothing." But Mr. Hamilton's objections to the Constitution were based, not on a lack, but on a superabundance in it of Mr. Henry's republican liberty!

The New Roof or the Gilded Trap, Federalists and Antifederalists, the "well-born" and the "Antis" —the contest was joined, the first essentially national

issue was before the people, out of the collapse of the old Whig party two new and completely American parties were arisen. American politics had come into being.

3

But in the midst of the uproar the State ratifying conventions were meeting and putting the thing through, and, except in a few cases without too much trouble. By the end of February, 1788, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut and Massachusetts had ratified. In Massachusetts, a delegation of artisans headed by Paul Revere had been obliged to argue Samuel Adams out of his antifederalism; in Pennsylvania, the call for a convention had been rushed through the Assembly, with two recalcitrant Antifederalists hauled from their homes by a Federalist mob and held by force in their seats during the roll call, in order to provide a quorum; here and there riots occurred, and a little local stone slinging; but when these alarums were over the conventions ratified and the citizenry celebrated. Left to themselves, it seemed that the people approved of the Constitution, and welcomed each additional state pillar set up to support the New Roof. It was only when the prominent republican patriots, those nervous self-appointed guardians of the popular liberties, showed them how

pernicious it was, that the people became, temporarily, disturbed. It was difficult for "simple honesty and plain sense" not to be at first distressed by the influential lamentations of such worthies as Mr. Henry, for instance.

"The new Constitution," Mr. Hamilton wrote to General Washington from New York, in October, "is as popular in this city as it is possible for any thing to be and the prospect thus far is favorable to it through the State. But there is no saying what turn things may take when the full flood of official influence is let loose against it. . . . The first impressions everywhere are in its favor, but the artillery of its opponents makes some impression."

Six States had ratified, and in April one more, Maryland. Then South Carolina, in May. Only one more State was needed, but still the Federalists were extremely anxious. Rhode Island was completely out of it, North Carolina would probably not ratify, New Hampshire had already adjourned once and was meeting again, Virginia and New York were sitting in bitter argument. And no matter if nine States did ratify, if Virginia and New York failed to do so the New Breeches would be irreparably damaged. Mr. Hamilton saw the danger and brought every possible influence to bear in his own State.

"Permit me to request," he wrote to the President

of New Hampshire, "that the instant you have taken a decisive vote in favor of the Constitution, you send me an express at Poughkeepsie. Let him take the shortest route to that place, change horses on the road, and use all possible diligence. I shall with pleasure defray all expenses and give a liberal reward to the person."

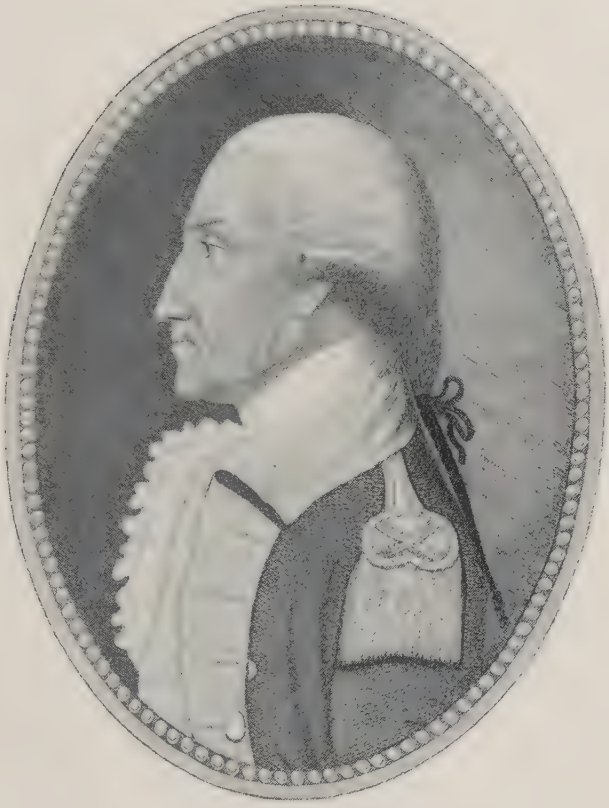
And when the news came in June that New Hampshire had finally ratified, putting the Constitution into effect in the nine States now on the list, New York began to talk of a league with Virginia and North Carolina which, regardless of the expense of separate diplomatic and consular officers involved—to say nothing of military and naval establishments—would effectively control the commerce of the United States. But the league was already doomed, for Virginia too had ratified, in spite of Mr. Henry and a turbulent campaign of bribery and hornswogglery. New York could then find consolation only in a reluctant act of ratification burdened with some thirty amendments.

The thing was done, the New Roof was on, to the sound of jubilant Federalist Fourth of July guns and bells celebrating New Hampshire and Virginia. Bonfires, processions, banquets and toasts—many Federal toasts drunk in Federal punch by gentlemen in Federal hats, for there was a popular new word in the national vocabulary—with a little dis-

gruntled stick shaking and burning in effigy by contrary minded citizens, while "the Fair" displayed their Federal enthusiasm in Federal spinning bees at the minister's house.

All but the ladies of Lansingburgh, who, in order to

"manifest their attachment to the Federal interest, formed as beautiful a procession as ever was beheld. They were sixty-four in number, dressed with the utmost neatness and simplicity, without the aid of foreign gewgaws to embellish their persons. . . . Preceded by two ladies supporting the Constitution ornamented with blue ribbon on the end of a flag staff, they walked, two by two, at a proper distance and in perfect order, through the different streets, while the countenances of the numerous and respectable beholders revealed the transporting joy which reigned triumphantly within their breast on viewing the amiable espousers of the Federal Cause. They then moved to the green . . . and beneath an elegant colonade permitted a large number of gentlemen to partake with them of the bounties of the tea table." And "tea being over, a drum, fife and violin gave the signal for a country dance. . . . The dance ended, the ladies again formed into a procession . . . and . . . moved to a house prepared for their reception, safely deposited the Constitution, and were again accompanied by the gentlemen in the innocent and elegant amusement of dancing from which the company retired at an early hour."



GEN.RL WASHINGTON

From an old print

Undoubtedly the first female political rally in America.

4

There was a new government for the United States, and new officers to be elected. Congress finally remembered the fact, after some lusty debating concerning the location of the temporary Federal Capital. New York, Philadelphia, Trenton, Baltimore, even Lancaster—they all wanted it, and begrudged the first decision in favor of New York. Suppose the building prepared at New York *had* cost £18000 paper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* remarked, "our new gaol alone cost the city and county of Philadelphia before the war £31000 of Pennsylvania specie." But New York it was, and if the new House and Senate were to sit there, they must be given a President and Vice-President. And so, in September, 1788—

"Resolved, That the first Wednesday in January next be the day for appointing Electors in the several States which before the said day shall have ratified the said Constitution; that the first Wednesday in February next be the day for the Electors to assemble in their respective States and vote for a President; and that the first Wednesday in March next be the time . . . for commencing proceedings under the said Constitution."

The resolution was printed in all the gazettes—not quite four months in which to choose these Electors

—and immediately the question presented itself to the public mind, not so much what men to choose but *how* to choose them? No machinery had been provided, no laws had been passed, the States had been too dubious concerning the fate of the Constitution itself to prepare official ways and means arising from it. Now Legislatures must be summoned, decisions arrived at regarding popular elections or legislative selections—in several States there was time only for the latter—and the whole matter of "tickets" to be canvassed.

In one or two States there were terrific arguments. In New Hampshire, where the popular vote having failed to provide a majority for any Elector, the General Court was obliged to appoint them, thereby precipitating a dispute between the House and the Senate regarding joint ballots in which "the observations made by the members of the Senate . . . were pertinent, manly and firm, those of the House ingenious, deep and well digested." And in New York, where a similar fracas between the branches of the Legislature resulted in a failure to select any Electors, so that the State which was to be his first official domicile took no part in the election of the first President of the United States, and with no very great regret.

Elsewhere the selection passed off quietly enough,

with popular elections only in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and Massachusetts in addition to the abortive one in New Hampshire. And the vote was very light; people did not go out of their way to express their political preference; there was not, apparently, any very great public interest in the affair.

"It is hoped the federalists will this day be active, and adhere firmly to their cause," such election day warnings were common in the gazettes. "It will be in vain that they have discussed and defended the Constitution, if they relinquish it at the important crisis of the elections. Let no man stay at home, but let each manfully do his own duty and exhort his neighbor to the same. . . . Let us take care we don't rue tomorrow the inactivity of today"—the plea has a quite modern ring!

But a great many men did stay at home, and the importance of the election as a crisis was not so manifest. Everything was so cut and dried; a district was Federalist or Antifederalist, a county was "well-born" or "Anti"; there was no local clash of parties, no sectional conflict of opinions. In many instances the minority did not trouble to appoint candidates. There was hardly any personal excitement; the opportunities for scurrilous ballyhoo residing in a national campaign—well appreciated in State politics—had not yet been discovered. It was

all too novel to be engrossing, too remote, perhaps, to be anything but perfunctory.

So the first Presidential Electors were chosen.

5

And if the elections which chose them were perfunctory, the execution of the mission entrusted to them was even more so. It was in their hands to elect a President for the United States, there had been no official nominations, they were to meet unhampered by any mandate; but there was probably not a single person in the country who did not know in advance that they would agree unanimously, regardless of party affiliation, on General Washington. No other arrangement would have been tolerated. It was not a political matter, it was a debt of gratitude and respect. The "American Fabius" was doomed from the beginning to perform a task for which he had no heart. There was no campaigning, no propaganda, no opposition. And no desire for the place on the part of the only candidate permissible in the public mind.

"We cannot, sir, do without you," Governor Johnson of Maryland insisted, "and I and thousands more can explain to anybody but yourself why we cannot do without you."

Letters of this nature poured in to Mount Vernon, more significant than any formal balloting, impossible

to ignore. The nation was not gratifying George Washington with an election, it was entreating from him the favour of his acceptance. A reluctant favor —there can be no doubt of that.

"The growing infirmities of age," he wrote Charles Pettit, in August, 1788, "and the increasing love of retirement daily confirm my decided predilection for domestic life; and the great Searcher of human hearts is my witness that I have no wish which aspires beyond the humble and happy lot of living and dying a private citizen on my own farm."

Nothing short of a conviction of duty would induce him "again to take an active part in public affairs," he told Lafayette as late as January, 1789. And as for Alexander Hamilton,

"You know me well enough, my good sir, to be persuaded that I am not guilty of affectation when I tell you that it is my great and sole desire to live and die in peace and retirement on my own farm." And later, "if I am not grossly deceived in myself, I should unfeignedly rejoice in case the electors, by giving their votes in favor of some other person, would save me from the dreaded dilemma of being forced to accept or refuse. . . . If I should receive the appointment, and if I should be prevailed upon to accept it, the acceptance would be attended with more diffidence and reluctance than I ever experienced before in my life."

But they kept pestering him about it, and none more earnestly, perhaps, than Mr. Hamilton.

"I take it for granted, sir," he began as early as August, 1788, "you have concluded to comply with what will no doubt be the general call of your country in relation to the new government. You will permit me to say that it is indispensable you should lend yourself to its first operations. It is of little purpose to have introduced a system if the weightiest influence is not given to its firm establishment in the outset." And when General Washington hesitated, and preferred not to commit himself, "I should be deeply pained, my dear sir, if your scruples . . . should be matured into a resolution to decline . . . I have . . . come to a conclusion . . . that every public and personal consideration will demand from you an acquiescence in what will *certainly* be the unanimous wish of your country."

The thing seemed unavoidable; and as for the risk of being accused of ambition if he decided to accept in advance—

"Whensoever I shall be convinced," General Washington informed Henry Lee, "the good of my country requires my reputation to be put in risk, regard for my own fame will not come in competition with an object of so much magnitude. If I decline the task it would lie upon quite another principle . . . a belief that some other person who had less pretence and less inclination to be excused could execute all

the duties as satisfactorily as myself. To say more would be indiscreet; as a disclosure of a refusal beforehand might incur the application of the fable in which the fox is represented as undervaluing the grapes he could not reach."

And in conclusion, "you will perceive . . . that my inclinations will dispose and decide me to remain as I am, unless a clear and insurmountable conviction should be impressed on my mind that some very disagreeable consequences must, in all human probability, result from the indulgence of my wishes."

The time for the Electoral vote approached, and General Washington had not said No.

6

Over the vice-presidency there was more argument, and some play of conflicting claims; but after it had been decided that the vice-president ought to come from New England, and the pretensions of certain local favorite sons had been canvassed, the public choice fell naturally on John Adams—the patriot of the Continental Congress and America's first Minister to Great Britain. "Honest old John Adams who never failed his country in her hour of need."

"It is with singular pleasure that we discover that the Hon. John Adams Esq. is generally spoken of in the Eastern States for vice-president," the *Pennsylvania Gazette* announced. "To the Constitution . . .

he has erected a monument in the conclusion of his essays, in an encomium which places it among the first productions of human wisdom and benevolence. With our American Romulus in the President's, and a John Adams in the Vice-President's chairs, the United States cannot fail of becoming respectable abroad, and of bearing down ignorance, selfishness and faction at home."

Of course he had invented the term "well-born"; he was accused by the republicans of being a monarchist and a lover of nobility; he was a New Englander, and, according to Senator Maclay of Pennsylvania, "no people in the Union dwell more on trivial distinctions and matters of mere form"; he was "full of small attentions," a perfect tailor in his ability "to adjust the etiquette of loops and buttons"—he was certainly to make a terrific fuss over ceremonies and titles during the first months of the new administration, until they began calling him "His Rotundity"—he was frightfully vain, and Senator Maclay was not to conceal the fact that in his State they had "puffed John Adams in the papers" for the vice-presidency simply because "we knew his vanity, and hoped by laying hold of it to render him useful among the New England men in our scheme of bringing Congress to Pennsylvania." But still, old John Adams! It might almost be said that the first presidential

election in America was in reality a public honoring of two national favorite sons.

But in certain Federalist circles there was also considerable doubt concerning the eligibility of Mr. Adams. It was remembered that during the Revolutionary War he had strongly criticized General Washington; it was understood that he was jealous of the Great Man—the belief was apparently quite well founded, confirmed subsequently in such petty ways as a refusal to attend a Washington's Birthday ball—it was feared that he would not be an acceptable Remus to the "American Romulus."

On the other hand, Benjamin Lincoln was assuring General Washington that with Mr. Adams "Your Excellency will be perfectly happy. . . . There is not a virtue in your character . . . but it seems to be known and acknowledged by him." And General Washington, granting his own election "for argument's sake," was quite willing. Assuming the Vice-President to be "a true Federalist," whosoever "shall be found to enjoy the confidence of the States . . . cannot be disagreeable to me in that office." Mr. Adams would doubtless make a very good Vice-President, "and let whoever may occupy the first seat, I shall be entirely satisfied with that arrangement for filling the second office."

As for Alexander Hamilton—and one must begin to pay a great deal of attention to Mr. Hamilton—

he too had his doubts concerning Mr. Adams. There was a "hesitation" in his mind because a "particular gentleman" had suggested to him that Mr. Adams was "unfriendly in his sentiments to General Washington." However, after mature consideration, Mr. Hamilton "relinquished" his "scruple." Mr. Adams "to a sound understanding has always appeared to me to add an ardent love for the public good, and as his further knowledge of the world seems to have corrected those jealousies which he is represented to have once been influenced by, I trust nothing . . . will disturb the harmony of the administration." And so, "I have, upon the whole, concluded that [Mr. Adams] ought to be supported. My measures will be taken accordingly."

The boss of the Federalist party, the young gentleman who had "no objections to a trial being made of this thing of a republic," America's first campaign manager, had spoken.

7

He was to speak without intermission, to lay down the party law, through the medium principally of prudently private letters and briefs—one of which, however, was accidentally to become uncomfortably public—on every election until his death. It was, in fact, for having thus spoken once too often that he died, challenged and shot by Colonel Burr after the in-

famous New York election of 1804. Never himself a candidate for either the presidential or the vice-presidential office—he was too young in 1789, too unpopular thereafter with the masses whom he scorned, and with countless men of influence whom he offended by his arbitrary temperament—Alexander Hamilton nevertheless held the Federalist party under his thumb. He was the oracle, the power behind the throne—the presidential chair was scarcely less in his mind—the dictator of political destinies. He was the American Warwick, this originally obscure young man from the West Indies, Hamilton the President Maker.

He decided, he arranged and he instructed. He concluded and he took measures. And continually he wrote, many, many private, prudent letters, insinuating, suggesting, demanding. His fingers were in every pie. He did not have to be consulted, for he was always anticipating, managing, ordering. To some who suffered from his ordering it seemed that frequently he merely interfered, brazenly, and not always without duplicity.

Throughout the presidential elections of 1788, 1792, 1796 and 1800—and throughout the administrations which intervened—there is perhaps no more absorbing and startling a spectacle than that of Alexander Hamilton managing the affairs of the Federalist party, of the Cabinet, of the Vice-Presi-

dent and of the President; with a self-assurance which leaves one breathless, an assumption of omniscient authority which is one of the marvels of that era, a dictatorial impatience equalled only by the sublime egotism of genius with which it was nourished. That in the end, as a result of his managing, he ruined his own party, suffered the humiliation of political defeat at the hands of the opponent whom he chiefly despised and witnessed the simultaneous elevation to the presidency and vice-presidency respectively of the two individuals whom he most feared and detested—Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr—remains the principal tragedy of his career.

There was no cause whatever to worry about the Bishop of Osnaburgh. He would have amounted to nothing at all, with Alexander Hamilton, the uncrowned King of America, at his elbow.

8

And in 1788 Mr. Hamilton was alarmed.

"If it should be thought expedient," he wrote Mr. Madison, "to endeavor to unite on a particular character, there is a danger . . . to which we must not be inattentive—the possibility of rendering it doubtful who is appointed President. You know the Constitution has not provided the means of distinguishing in certain cases, and it would be disagreeable to have a man treading close upon the heels of the person we wish as President."

GEORGE WASHINGTON,
President of the United States of
AMERICA.

From a print published in 1796

Mr. Hamilton was certain that General Washington would be unanimously desired, and told him so, but at the same time Mr. Hamilton was leaving nothing to chance. The General's reputation, the affection and respect in which he was held throughout the country, were not sufficient, it seemed, to assure his election unless Mr. Hamilton gave him the protection of his safeguarding intrigue. Mr. Hamilton must manage things. Votes must be turned away from Mr. Adams, lest he tread too close.

And so Mr. Hamilton let it be known that there was a possibility that Mr. Adams might outrun General Washington. There were hostile schemes under way, and Mr. Adams might be elected President—a regrettable eventuality of course, if true. In Virginia Mr. Hamilton intimated that New England would not be unanimous for General Washington. In New England Mr. Hamilton spread the news of desertion in Virginia. In Connecticut a post rider sent by Mr. Hamilton threw the Electors into a panic and caused a scattering of Adams votes.

"Many of your friends were duped on this occasion," Mr. Trumbull confided to Mr. Adams later. "I will inform you how it was managed in Connecticut. On the day before the election Colonel Webb came on express to Hartford, sent, as he said, by Colonel Hamilton . . . who he assured us had made an exact calculation . . . I exclaimed against the measure,

and insisted that it was all a deception; but what could my single opinion avail against an express armed with intelligence and calculations."

Granted the actuality of the peril, the wisdom of Mr. Hamilton's precautionary course was self-evident; assuming the genuineness of his calculations, the sincerity of his alarm was unquestionable—but his calculations were not genuine. Virginia had no intention of deserting General Washington, New England was solidly for him, the Electoral vote was unanimous. Mr. Hamilton was pretending the peril. As for the vice-presidency, Mr. Hamilton knew that the Electors were not all Federal men, there would inevitably be votes cast for other persons besides Mr. Adams. Georgia alone, Mr. Stanwood points out, "distinguished itself by discovering four of its own citizens worthy to be placed second to Washington." There were no votes at all given to Mr. Adams in three other States. It was not necessary to deduct so assiduously from his poll, it was not necessary to alarm Virginia about New England, it was not necessary to send expresses into Connecticut, it was not necessary to campaign among his friends against Mr. Adams behind his back.

Perhaps these circumstances were not evident at the time to Mr. Hamilton, burdened as he professed himself to be with the precarious responsibility of

insuring General Washington's election. His subsequent explanations—in a pamphlet attacking Mr. Adams to which reference will again be made in these pages—admitting certain premises, are unimpeachable.

"It was deemed," he stated, "an essential point of caution to take care that accident, or an intrigue of the opposers of government, should not raise Mr. Adams instead of General Washington, to the first place. This every friend of the government would have considered a disastrous event. . . . It was therefore agreed that a few votes should be diverted from Mr. Adams to other persons, so as to insure to General Washington a plurality. Great was my astonishment, and equally great my regret, when afterwards I learned . . . that Mr. Adams had complained of unfair treatment, in not having been permitted to take an equal chance with General Washington, by leaving the votes to an uninfluenced current. The extreme egotism of the temper which could blind a man to considerations so obvious as those that had recommended the course pursued cannot be enforced by my comment. It exceeded all that I had imagined, and showed, in too strong a light, that the vanity which I have ascribed to him existed to a degree that rendered it more than a harmless foible."

A perfect explanation, admitting certain premises. That Mr. Adams was vain is undeniable, that he

would just as soon have seen himself President is probably true—but that he should be mortally offended by Mr. Hamilton's interference was, in any event, inevitable. What Mr. Hamilton never understood was the meaning of the word tact; what consistently surprised him was that people should resent his underhand efforts, no matter in how valid a cause. It surprised him in the case of Mr. Adams, and resulted eventually in the disruption of the Federalist party; it surprised him in the case of Colonel Burr, and resulted finally in his own destruction.

9

The Electors met, very quietly in their ten States, and the thing was done. General Washington was unanimously elected with sixty-nine votes. Mr. Adams was second with only thirty-four. He had not trodden too close. Ten other gentlemen shared the distinction of having been mentioned.

"It appears that illustrious soldier and venerated citizen George Washington Esq. is unanimously elected first President of the United States," the *Pennsylvania Gazette* remarked. "Ye little great ones of the world! How might the man who floats upon the full tide of universal approbation look down upon hereditary right!"

Lord Cornwallis sent felicitations when he heard; and "Hark," the Honorable Artillery Company at

banquet assembled sang—quite obviously to the tune of *God Save the King*—

> "Hark! The loud trumps proclaim
> Washington's glorious name!
> Charge! Fill again,
> Fill the bowl—fill it high,
> First born Son of the Sky!
> May he never, never die,
> Heaven shout Amen!"

Later on Mr. Adams came clattering down to New York from Braintree with his cavalry escorts; General Washington up from Mount Vernon, under the triumphal arches of Trenton where "virgins fair and matrons grave" strewed the Hero's way with flowers; and the *Boston Gazette* announced that—

"We hear much of the birthday of our Columbia. . . . Tomorrow is the day of her Espousals—when in the presence of the King of Kings the solemn Compact will be ratified between her and the darling object of her choice. May she date from that moment the brightest scenes of freedom and happiness under the auspices of the wise and glorious administration of the President of her Affections."

The Bishop of Osnaburgh was quite forgotten.

The President by Three Votes

1796

THE PRESIDENT BY THREE VOTES

1796

1

"If ever a nation was debauched by a man, the American nation has been debauched by Washington. If ever a nation was deceived by a man, the American nation has been deceived by Washington . . ."

These interesting observations were made in December, 1796, by the Philadelphia *Aurora,* edited by Benjamin Franklin Bache or "Lightning Rod Junior," and are typical of the abuse with which General Washington was plastered by the Jeffersonian Republican press during the final months of his last administration.

For at the close of his presidency—the Farewell Address had appeared in September—the "American Romulus" was mightily fallen in Democratic-Republican estimation. He had made a treaty with England, he had insisted on neutrality towards France, he had held "levees" at his "court" and driven abroad in a fancy coach with liveried servants, he had

done this, that and the other—and he was an aristocrat and a tyrant, an Anglomaniac and a monarchist, an "impostor," an "embezzler," a "crocodile" and a "hyena." There were not enough words.

"Elevated to the chair of the presidency," Tom Paine did not hesitate to tell him, "you assumed the merit of everything to yourself, and the natural ingratitude of your constitution began to appear. You commenced your presidential career by encouraging and swallowing the grossest adulation, and you travelled America from one end to the other to put yourself in the way of receiving it." Aside from that, "as to you, sir, treacherous to private friendship . . . and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any."

Loud Republican cheers.

And the Farewell Address itself was "fraught with incalculable evils to your country," in the opinion of William Duane. It was received with exultation only by those who were "the avowed enemies of equal Liberty, the decided friends of monarchy, the open advocates of privileged and distinct classes." In other words, the Hamiltonian Federalists. "You will have noticed," Citizen Minister Adet was telling the French Government at the same time, "the lies which [the Address] contains, the tone of insolence

which pervades it, the immorality which characterises it."

"Would to God," Mr. Duane exclaimed, "you had retired to a private station four years ago, while your public conduct threw a veil of sanctity around you . . . your fame would have been safe, your country without reproach, and I should not have the mortifying task of pointing out the blind temerity with which *you* come forward to defend the religion of Christ, who exist in the violation of its *most sacred obligations,* of the dearest *ties of humanity,* and in *defiance of the sovereign calls of morality and liberty*—by dealing in HUMAN SLAVES!"

And more than that—

"posterity will in vain search for the monuments of wisdom in your administration." Examining the declarations of those "who assert that your attachment to the revolution was not the result of a love of republican freedom but of disappointed ambition—that had you obtained promotion as you expected . . . your sword would have been drawn against your country—comparing these assertions with sad existing facts, they will discover that the great champion of American Freedom . . . twenty years after the establishment of the Republic, was possessed of FIVE HUNDRED of the HUMAN SPECIES IN SLAVERY . . . that he retained the barbarous usages of the feudal system and kept men in LIVERY—and that he still affected to be the friend

of the Christian religion, of civil liberty and moral equality."

It was not permitted, in stern republican circles, to keep even a coachman in uniform.

2

There was something fanatically earnest under all this idiocy, frantically sincere. Behind the riotous mob scenes of the hostile popular turmoil over Mr. Jay's recent commercial treaty with England—"Damn John Jay! Damn everyone who won't damn John Jay! Damn everyone who won't put lights in his windows and sit up all night damning John Jay!"—behind the fatuous spectacles which had adorned the public receptions in 1793 of the first French republican Minister, Citizen Genêt—with their fraternal huggings, and singings, and processionings—there was something terribly vital. There was the French Revolution.

In a country animated by the profoundest sentiments of gratitude and friendship towards France—sentiments which saw in Lafayette the whole French nation, and were quite incapable of analysing the foreign policy of a monarch for whom the American Colonies had been simply an avenue of attack on England—in the minds of a people enjoying the newly acquired benefits, or so they had seemed in anticipation, of a republican form of government,

the drama across the seas could not have failed to arouse the most intense interest and partisanship. It made itself manifest, the latter, on the one hand by an epidemic of Liberty caps and poles, an acute imitation of everything Gallic, a continuous din of celebrating guns and bells, a complete adoption of the principles set forth by the French republicans—all the more eagerly, perhaps, since the late enemy, England, condemned and repudiated them; on the other hand by a fierce scorn of the "filthy democrats"—the term was "Lady" Washington's—and their theories, a horror of the revolutionary leaders and their sanguinary works, an actual dread of a similar terror in America.

"There is not a single action of the French revolutionists," one celebrated pamphleteer proclaimed, "but has been justified and applauded in our public papers, and many of them in our public assemblies. Anarchy has its open advocates. We have seen the guillotine toasted to three times three cheers. And what would the reader say were I to tell him of a member of Congress who wished to see one of the murderous machines, employed for lopping off the heads of aristocrats, permanent in the State House yard of the City of Philadelphia? If these men of blood had once got the sword into their hands they would have mowed us down like stubble. We might have seen the banks of the Delaware, like those of the Loire, covered with human carcasses and its

waters tinged with blood: ere this we might have seen our parents butchered, and even the head of our admired and beloved President rolling on the scaffold."

It was quite true that the American republicans of Charleston, of Philadelphia, of New York, of Boston, were roaring about the "Hydra of Despotism" and the "Phoenix of Freedom"; that they were everywhere holding "grand civic pageants" in which the "Ox of Aristocracy" was paraded through the streets to be slaughtered, and his head and horns hoisted to the top of flag poles—"while the balconies of the houses exhibited bevies of our amiable and beautiful women, who by their smiles and approbation cast a pleasing luster over the festive scenes"; that they were ridiculing the "monarchical farce" of the President's Birthday observance, and reminding the "aristocratic junto" that hitherto the American people had

"passed over the absurdities of *levees* and *every species of royal pomp and parade*, because they were associated with the man of their affections . . . but their own interest has at length conquered the delicacy of their attachment, and they begin to express their abhorrence of the gewgaws of a court with the manliness of freemen who are resolved not to erect a funeral pile for their liberties."

It was quite true that the "Jacobin" Democratic Societies throughout the country had abolished all titles, recommending the "social and soul warming" term Citizen in place of Mister, and insisting that "to give the title Reverend to any man is not only anti-republican but absolutely blasphemous;" that in their resolutions they applauded the struggles of the French People as "directed to the subversion of Aristocracy and despotism," and lamented "the amazing want of Republicanism which now forms a conspicuous trait in the characters composing the highest officers in the Federal government," as well as the eclipsing of the spirit of freedom and equality "by the pride of wealth and the arrogance of power."

It was quite true that triumphal arches greeted the news of the execution of Louis XVI; that men, women and children flocked to see the waxworks of that function and watch "the knife fall, the head drop and the lips turn blue;" that assemblages of respectable citizens drank toasts to the event, solemnly plunging knives into the body, roasted, of a symbolic pig; that while Fenno's Federalist gazette referred to the "King of Sorrows," and to Imagination which—

> ". . . sees around the crimson'd scaffold stand
> Democracy with furious eye,
> Delirious Rage, pale Jealousy,
> While joyous Murder crowns her regicidal hand . . ."

the Republican sheets blared that "Louis Capet has

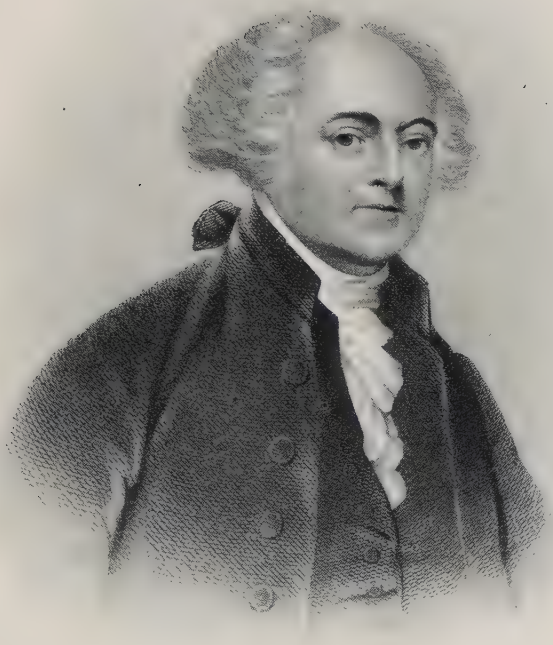
lost his Caput. From my use of a pun it may seem that I think lightly of his fate. I certainly do . . . In the case of Louis, because there are so many Kings, and Queens, and Aristocrats throughout the world to make a mountain of the matter, I disdain to join with them or feel pity at all."

It was quite true that in the theatres the galleries were howling the new *Marseillaise,* and that in the city streets at night rabbles went tramping by, dancing the *Carmagnole* under the windows of the "well-born"—under the windows of the President and of the Vice-President at Philadelphia—bellowing the song of the execution tumbrils, the *Ça Ira* of Robespierre's Paris.

Aristocrats, aristocrats—"twenty years after the establishment of the Republic" America was still ringing with the word.

3

Of course they were aristocrats. George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton—all the great Federalists, all the men who were promoting sound government. Not an aristocracy of heredity, of ancestry necessarily—Alexander Hamilton was, in the words of John Adams, the "bastard brat of a Scotch pedler"—but an aristocracy of achievement and environment, of manners, habits and tastes. Men of means, some of them, of culture and breeding.



John Adams

From an engraving by Buttre

Men far removed in thought and custom, in education and intelligence, in speech and deportment, from the rural, backwoods, waterfront tavern masses, the husbandmen and trappers, the mariners, and artisans, and apprentices of the early American populace.

Aristocrats to the marrow, completely remote, instinctively aloof from the unlettered vulgarities of the common "herd," the "mobility," the "swinish multitude" of their day. Republicans, yes, they were all republicans in that they had established a republic, but the change from their previous state was a political, not a social one. It must never be imagined for a moment that any considerable proportion of the original "rulers" of the American Republic envisaged in that institution any diminution of public forms and deferences, any departure from established social amenities and discriminations, any undue popular participation in the affairs of government. Representation and elections by the people—but the Federal personages so elected would naturally always be drawn, in the main, from the select groups in the nation, the educated, the experienced, the well-to-do, men of influence and ability, capable of performing the public duties with discretion and decorum. Men who believed in a strong, central government, for, but not beyond a certain point by, the "people" who in their estimation were not fit for

such responsibilities. Men who in their devotion to the principles of liberty as a political theory had not surrendered any portion of their faith in the self-evident social and intellectual differentiations of humankind. Men who believed that the masses could be free, and pursue their lives, liberties and happiness, without bringing their muddy boots into other peoples' parlors. John Randolph was to express it for them—"I am an aristocrat," he once said. "I love liberty, I hate equality."

Aristocrats; intelligent gentlemen, accustomed to the decencies and refinements of an old world society, an English society—its vices and ostentations have since been surpassed with far less grace—which democracy and independence, in their minds, did not render any less desirable; and those pleasant ladies, their wives, arbiters in their own time and fashion of elegance and ease, hostesses of note. It is not treason, surely, to recall that once, for a while, the national destinies were still in the hands of such persons, and that General Washington, and John Adams, and their associates were of their number—while Thomas Jefferson frowned.

Of course there were upstarts among them, mercenary snobs and parvenus, arrogant boors parading their vulgarity under the trappings of an extravagant wealth. And of course some of them were very tepidly republican, some quite frankly monarchical.

The habit of the monarch was, after all, somewhat firmly embedded in the American consciousness of that day. They felt rather lost without him, and the people themselves had soon missed His Majesty's Birthday holiday, until it occurred to them to substitute the President's for it. The association of ideas in certain minds is not difficult to follow.

As for Mr. Hamilton, in the Federal Convention he had advocated an aristocratic republic and not a democratic one, he had wished to see the country "rescued from democracy," he had proposed a hereditary monarch, at all events a "president" and senators elected for life, and the abolishment of the existing States. Later on he had explained to Colonel Carrington that

"I am affectionately attached to the republican theory. I desire above all things to see the equality of political rights, exclusive of all hereditary distinction, firmly established by a practical demonstration of its being consistent with the order and happiness of society." That is to say, if it worked, "and I add that I have strong hopes of the success of [the republican] theory; but, in candor, I ought also to add that I am far from being without doubts. I consider its success as yet a problem. It is yet to be determined by experience whether it be consistent with that stability and order in government which are essential to public strength and private security and happiness."

And while John Adams was eventually to be "no friend to hereditary limited monarchy in America" —he was rather for "enabling the Executive to be at all times capable of maintaining the balance between the Senate and House, or in other words between the Aristocratical and Democratical interests"—still, in 1789 he had agreed that

"every part of the conduct and feelings of the Americans tends to that species of Republic called a limited Monarchy . . . They were born and brought up in it. Their habits are fixed in it, but their Heads are most miserably bewildered about it. There is not a more ridiculous spectacle in the universe than the Politics of our Country exhibits: bawling about republicanism which they understand not, and acting a farce of Monarchy."

And he did not then "consider hereditary monarchy or aristocracy as rebellion against Nature. On the contrary, I esteem them both institutions of admirable wisdom and exemplary virtue in a certain stage of Society in a great Nation. The only institutions that can possibly preserve the laws and liberties of the people, and I am clear that America must resort to them as an asylum against discord, seditions and civil war, and that at no very distant period of time . . . I am by no means for attempting any such thing at present. Our country is not ripe for it in many respects, and it is not yet necessary, but our ship must ultimately land on that shore or be cast away."

No wonder, perhaps, that Citizen Adet—one finds many remarkable contemporary opinions in that French Envoy's official reports to his Government—wrote that Mr. Hamilton was "a man as crooked as he is ambitious, without shame or morals, enemy of all liberty, of all equality, who considers peoples merely as flocks of cattle, who dreams only of honors and pleasures, who sees no good government except the British . . . this Hamilton who directed and who still today directs the President." And of Mr. Adams that he was "known for his monarchist principles, his ponderous vanity and his ambition."

4

To these aristocrats the "bawlings" of the Republicans, the abusive screamings of the French partisans, the "grand civic pageants" and the resolutions of the Democratic Societies were a fantastic nightmare, naturally; an earnest of anarchy, a threat against order and government, and an attempt to plunge the country into war with England. It was of the Societies that General Washington was thinking when in his Farewell Address he wrote that "all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authority are . . . of fatal tendency," and "likely . . . to become potent en-

gines by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to . . . usurp for themselves the reins of government"—only to be told by the Republicans, and not without justice, that he was attacking the freedom of speech and criticism, and that he was lost "in the treacherous mazes of passion," that he had "discharged the loathings of a sick mind" and "the whole burthen of your blazing spirit at the object of your personal dislike."

To the Republicans who idolized France and the Revolution, who celebrated the Tenth of August and the Fourteenth of July, drank potent toasts to the Gallo-Columbian Fraternity of Freemen and called each other Citizen and Citess, the foreign policy of the Administration—with its treaty of amity with England and its declaration of neutrality towards France—was an evidence that the "British faction" ruled the American Government and that the Hamiltonian Federalists were enemies of France and Liberty and supporters of Great Britain and Tyranny. It was certain, Citizen Adet reported when the Jay treaty was signed, that "the President detested France and her revolution," now that he had "just put his signature to the dishonor of his old age and the shame of the United States." He was "obstinate in his resolutions, devoured by a thirst for power;" he was "no longer the savior of his country, but an ambitious man who sells a People delivered

into his hands as the result of an excessive trust in him."

France and England, tricolor cockades and white, Citizens and Aristocrats, Republicans and Federalists, Thomas Jefferson and the Hamiltonians—the whole country took sides and America was almost forgotten.

Thomas Jefferson and the Hamiltonians—for while the late Secretary of the Treasury was more than ever the boss of the Federalist party, the former Minister to France and Secretary of State—the gentleman who anonymously attacked his Chief's proclamations—was the champion of the Revolution, the Moses of the Republicans. He had returned to America, Mr. Hamilton wrote of him, "electrified plus with attachment to France;" he showed "a womanish attachment to France and a womanish resentment against Great Britain." Friendship for France, he himself confessed, was his "pole star," and the English were the "conspirators against human liberty." Although Citizen Adet was not so certain of him—

"I do not know," the French Minister wrote, "whether, as people assure me, we shall always find in him a man entirely devoted to our interests. Mr. Jefferson loves us because he detests England . . . but he would perhaps change his mind tomorrow regarding us, if tomorrow Great Britain ceased

to frighten him . . . Jefferson, I say, is an American, and consequently cannot sincerely be our friend. An American is the born enemy of all European nations."

A brilliant demagogue, a valiant pacifist, an abject leader of the "people," an ingratiating, double-dealing idealist, a timid, cultured fanatic who sometimes did change his mind—for in 1804 John Quincy Adams, having dined at Mr. Jefferson's, was to record in his diary that his host "thought it very much to be wished that [France] would now return to the Constitution of 1789 and call back the Old Family;" one of the most unexpected phazes, Mr. Adams decided, "in the waxing and waning opinions of this gentleman concerning the French Revolution."

It was certainly with all this Franco-British fracas in his mind, all this Jeffersonian Republican roaring for France and against England, that General Washington, on another page of his Address, remarked that

"permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachment for others, should be excluded," since "sympathy for the favorite Nation . . . gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens"—the Republicans could take their pick—"facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even

with popularity; gilding, with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion or a laudable zeal for public good, the base of foolish compliances of ambition, corruption or infatuation."

Such were the convictions, the spirit and the temper, with which men approached the presidential election of 1796.

5

For the Federalists, that is to say for Mr. Hamilton, the retirement of General Washington was, of course, a blow. His name, his place in the public esteem, had carried through many a disagreeable Federalist measure. It was difficult to find a suitable successor. Mr. Hamilton himself and Mr. Jay were entirely too unpopular with the people—the excise laws, the British treaty, had done for them—Mr. Adams, the inevitable choice of the party at large, was *persona non grata* to the Hamiltonians. "That unbending vanity," Citizen Adet had observed, "that absolute self-confidence, that obstinacy which characterises [Adams] will never allow him to listen to anyone or to take anyone's advice, much less Hamilton's whom he detests"—if for nothing else, for his interference with Mr. Adams's vice-presidential vote in 1789, a "black intrigue" as it had seemed to the victim of it.

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And Mr. Hamilton had to have somebody to advise, to lay down the law to, and Senator Maclay had long ago discovered that John Adams was "the most unmanageable of all brutes" in this respect. And so for a while Mr. Hamilton and Rufus King thought of the veteran Patrick Henry—a violent "Anti" in his day, but now a good, prosperous Federalist—but Mr. Henry was "unwilling to embark in the business." Although it did not matter any more, because Mr. Hamilton had already begun to think of somebody else, and "I rather wish to be rid of Patrick Henry," he informed Mr. King, "that we may be at full liberty to take up Pinckney"—Thomas Pinckney, late Governor of South Carolina, Minister to England and Spain, and a gentleman of parts, well appearing, gifted and aristocratic. So it was decided in Federalist circles, after Mr. Hamilton had spoken.

"The Republicans will support Mr. Jefferson . . . and Colonel Burr," Citizen Adet, who knew everything, was able to announce in June. "The other party nominates John Adams . . . and Mr. Pinckney."

But if it was the intention of Federalists in general to put Mr. Adams in the presidential chair with Mr. Pinckney second, such does not appear to have been the intention of Mr. Hamilton. Just as in 1789 Mr. Hamilton had contrived to take votes away from

Mr. Adams on the plea that his candidacy was dangerous to that of General Washington, so in 1796 Mr. Hamilton, in private, campaigned vigorously for Mr. Pinckney, on the quite plausible ground that a fear of Mr. Pinckney's outrunning Mr. Adams might result in a scattering of the Pinckney vote, and that such action would only strengthen Mr. Jefferson.

"It is far less important," Mr. Hamilton wrote in September, "who of many men . . . shall be [President] than that it shall not be Jefferson. We have everything to fear if this man comes in . . . All personal and partial considerations must be discarded and everything must give way to the great object of excluding Jefferson. It appears to be a common opinion . . . that Mr. Adams and Mr. Pinckney . . . are to be supported on our side . . . Yet I have some apprehensions . . . lest the fear that he may outrun Mr. Adams should withhold votes from Pinckney. Should this happen, it will be, in my opinion, a most unfortunate policy. It will be to take one only instead of two chances against Mr. Jefferson, and . . . there can be no doubt that the exclusion of Mr. Jefferson is far more important than any difference between Mr. Adams and Mr. Pinckney."

And so let there be an equal vote for Mr. Adams and Mr. Pinckney, regardless of deadlocks which the House would break—probably in favor of Mr.

Pinckney, incidentally—and regardless even of the risk of Mr. Pinckney's being brought in ahead of Mr. Adams, for was not the only thing that mattered the defeat of Mr. Jefferson?

Mr. Hamilton was to be more frank about it in 1800, in his pamphlet attacking Mr. Adams.

"It is true," he then admitted, "that a faithful execution of this plan would have given Mr. Pinckney a somewhat better chance than Mr. Adams; nor shall it be concealed that an issue favorable to the former would not have been disagreeable to me . . . My position was that if chance"—carefully supervised by Mr. Hamilton—"should decide in favor of Mr. Pinckney, it probably would not be a misfortune; since he to every essential qualification for the office added a temper far more discreet and conciliatory than that of Mr. Adams."

And far more subservient, Citizen Adet would have added.

"It is not without disappointment," he remarked, "that Hamilton and his party see Adams achieve the presidency. Pinckney was the man of their choice . . . he was a character which the British faction could have ruled at will; the name of the President would have been different but not the dummy. With John Adams it won't be the same . . . Adams is jealous of Washington; he wishes to cause his name to be forgotten; he seeks to gain the

approval of his contemporaries, the esteem of posterity."

At all events, as a result of his renewed management, Mr. Hamilton helped to accomplish precisely what he had proclaimed that he was trying to prevent. Whether the friends of Mr. Adams—some of the gentlemen who had been "duped" in 1789—suspected Mr. Hamilton's interference and deliberately threw away Pinckney votes; or whether it was simply the obstinate Federalist conviction, reinforced by Mr. Hamilton's indifference, that Mr. Adams and not Mr. Pinckney should be President—when the Electors cast their ballots eighteen New England Federalists and three more in Maryland withheld votes which might normally have gone to him from Mr. Pinckney, leaving him nine votes behind Mr. Jefferson. Connecticut, for instance—the scene of some of Mr. Hamilton's special efforts in 1789—wasted five of its nine Pinckney votes on John Jay.

Nine votes to tie Mr. Jefferson and a tenth to beat—and it would be interesting to know exactly how many of those twenty-one New England and Maryland Federalists would have voted of their own accord for Mr. Pinckney if Mr. Hamilton had left well enough alone without disturbing them with his insistence that they do so. Mr. Pinckney might possibly have been President—since Jeffersonian South

Carolina voted, nevertheless, for him—Mr. Jefferson would almost certainly not have been Vice-President.

So Mr. Hamilton sowed the storm and reaped the whirlwind.

6

But if Mr. Hamilton had his fingers in the pie, another gentleman was in it too. In the midst of the furious commotion of election frauds alleged by the Republicans against the Federalists, the latter were always wanting to know where their vociferous opponents had learned their slogan of "Liberty, equality and no King!" From a foreigner, perhaps? From the gentleman whom "Peter Porcupine" had dubbed The Diplomatic Blunderbuss—"when we see an unprincipled, shameless bully . . . when we see such a gasconading, impudent bluff as this . . . we call him a Blunderbuss." The gentleman who issued the proclamation calling on all Frenchmen in America to show their colors and "mount" the tricolor cockade—a request obeyed by all the Republican supporters of the French cause, for whom the cockade forthwith became the Jeffersonian campaign emblem. The voluble Citizen Pierre Auguste Adet, Minister from France.

And he was in it up to his elbow. It was in Pennsylvania, and things were very close. Thirty Elec-

tors were to be voted on, two lists of fifteen, on November 4, and the Federalists were confident of success. And then, on October 27, Citizen Adet sent a note to the State Department and caused it to be published a few days later in the Republican gazettes.

"The issue of the Pennsylvania elections is not known," Oliver Wolcott wrote soon after, "but though hopes are entertained that the Federal ticket may prevail, I think the contrary most probable. Various causes have conspired to produce this effect . . . but these would have been insufficient without the publication of Mr. Adet's note. If Mr. Jefferson is elected it will be owing entirely to the influence of this paper . . . The election of Mr. Jefferson I consider fatal to our independence, now that the interference of a foreign nation in our affairs is no longer disguised . . . The circumstance that he permits himself to be named a candidate . . . renders him unworthy of confidence. No virtuous or wise man would, in my opinion, expose his country to the dangers, and his character to the imputations, which must issue from an election under the unmasked influence of a foreign nation."

Pennsylvania voted, after reading Citizen Adet's note, and thirteen Republican Electors were chosen. There were not three hundred votes separating the candidates at the top and bottom of the returns, and a change of one hundred votes in the State would

have turned the tables in favor of Mr. Pinckney against Mr. Jefferson in the national count. It was a last minute Republican flop, in which the peace loving Quakers seem to have had their share.

And what Citizen Adet had done, discussing the Federalist Administration's policy of neutrality towards France, was to express the French Government's remonstrances, "founded upon the duties of neutrality, *upon the principles which Mr. Jefferson had laid down,*" and to announce that henceforth "the French Republic will treat neutral vessels, either as to confiscation, as to searches or capture, in the same manner as they shall suffer the English to treat them." The Federalist policy was unsatisfactory, Mr. Jefferson's was acceptable, and if the American Government's attitude was not altered France would retaliate. It was with this document very much in their commercial minds that the Pennsylvania voters went, four days later, to the polls.

Citizen Adet followed it, a few weeks later, with another public note widely copied throughout the country, in which he announced the suspension of French diplomatic relations with America and "the resolution of a Government, terrible to its enemies but generous to its allies." The new note recited all the French grievances against the American Government, which, if it

"had been impartial . . . *would have preferred the measures proposed by Mr. Jefferson* . . . These measures were simple, they were in conformity with the duties of neutrality and the interests of the Republic." The French Republic. Aside from that, "the Government of the United States and the American People are not to regard the suspension [of diplomatic relations] as a rupture between France and the United States, but as a mark of just discontent, which is to last until the Government of the United States returns to sentiments and to measures more conformable to the interests of the alliance and the sworn friendship between the two nations."

And in closing, "alas . . . scattered ruins of houses laid waste . . . in order to leave monuments of British fury, are still to be found [in America]. Men still exist who can say here a ferocious Englishman slaughtered my father; there my wife tore her . . . daughter from the hands of an unbridled Englishman. Alas . . . the ploughman, with tears of tenderness and gratitude, still recollects that his fields . . . have been moistened with French blood. . . . Oh Americans, covered with noble scars . . . let your Government return to itself, and you will still find in Frenchmen faithful friends and generous allies."

These remarkable compositions, addresses to the voters of America under the guise of diplomatic communications to the State Department, became,

with the letters of *Phocion* and *Federalist,* the outstanding campaign documents of the election; quoted in all the gazettes, and turned against the French Jeffersonian party by the Federalists as examples of "an outrageous attempt on the dignity of an independent nation"—while the Republicans retorted that the Citizen was only following instructions received from his Government, and that in any case the British outrages on American shipping were much more important.

7

Mr. Bowers, in his *Jefferson and Hamilton,* dismisses rather briefly the incident of Citizen Adet's interference.

"Then came Adet's letter to Pickering," he writes, "reviewing the complaints of France against the American Government, and mentioning Jefferson pleasantly in connection with his official acts—and the Federalists had an issue. France was trying to dictate a President to America. Her Minister was electioneering. . . . What though Bache did point out that the letter was written on instructions from Paris given before the announcement of Washington's retirement—it was a campaign screed!"

Mr. Bowers leaves one with the impression that the excitement over Citizen Adet was merely trumped up Federalist propaganda against Mr. Jefferson.

The documentary evidence scarcely corroborates this impression. The pro-French, anti-British character of the election is undeniable; Mr. Jefferson's attachment to France, Colonel Burr's predilection for all things French, are established; one has seen the context of Citizen Adet's pleasant mention of Mr. Jefferson in connection with his official acts; the French Minister's correspondence with his Government, available in the 1903 Report of the American Historical Association, is eloquent of his concern in the election, of his appreciation of Mr. Jefferson's value to France and of his hopes for his success.

"Each party claims to have a majority," he announces. "But our friends do not doubt of their success . . . if the Executive Committee of the *Directoire* will make known its opinion concerning the behavior of the Federal Government, if in this manner it will give renewed strength to the men who are devoted to us." Such passages are fairly explicit. "One may hope that Mr. Jefferson will be brought to the presidential chair. . . . From all indications Mr. Jefferson will do away with the etiquette as a result of which his predecessor excluded himself from all conversation relating to public affairs with foreign envoys." As for the notes to the State Department, "our friends think that the measures adopted by the Executive Committee of

the *Directoire* with regard to the Federal Government will have a great influence on the choice of the President who is about to be elected. They expect that the electoral votes will be given to Jefferson"—in spite of the British faction which, on its side, "has neglected no effort to have electors chosen in all the States on whom it can rely."

And if this were not sufficient, there is Citizen Adet's letter to the French Minister of Foreign Relations, concerning the publication of his October note—the one just prior to the Pennsylvania election—in which he states definitely that "I had it printed in order to arouse public attention at the moment when electors were to be chosen who are to select the President, and at the same time to judge by the effect it would produce on the Government what results I might expect from the second session of Congress."

The case against Citizen Adet—against the Republican campaigners with whom he evidently consulted—seems reasonably clear.

8

Throughout the turmoil Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams behaved with dignity, entrenched in silence. Indeed, one is asked to believe that Mr. Jefferson did not, on this occasion, desire the presidency. But there was never any doubt concerning his candidacy

as the leader of the popular, democratic, French party in the minds either of the Republicans or of the Federalists.

In public—in the handbills, pamphlets and gazettes in which gentlemen of all persuasions held forth anonymously and prolifically—the campaign was distinguished by scurrility, mendacious acrimony and a monumental idiocy. *Phocion* for the Federalists, and *A Federalist* who was not a Federalist at all, but a Republican, had a great deal to say about the Jay treaty, about funding and public credit, about Mr. Adams's writings on government, and about the Administration's foreign policy. Other polemists were more concerned with the Franco-British, republican-aristocratic aspects of the ballyhoo.

Mr. Adams was a monarchist, a lover of titles and nobility, a gentleman who spoke of the "swinish multitude," a lawyer who had defended the British "assassins" after the Boston Massacre.

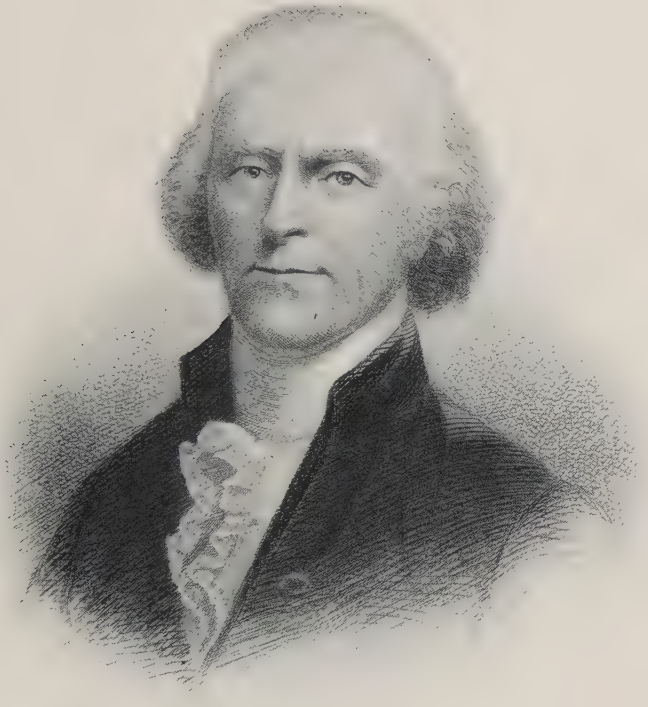
"John . . . an obscure country attorney, son of a shoemaker . . . scarce ever heard of even in Boston until seven citizens of that town were murdered by British soldiers under the command of one Preston . . . No lawyer was to be found hardy enough to advocate and plead the cause of Preston but John Adams. An hundred guineas fee"—Mr. Adams had actually received eighteen for his services—"a sight

which had never before passed under his eyes, dazzled and was not to be resisted . . . He pretended afterwards to be a violent patriot . . . and from his affectation of patriotism he was sent to Congress."

"To the Swinish Multitude, Brethren," a Western American wrote, "I have not a doubt but you will agree with Mr. Adams that we are only fit to be governed . . . I hope you will join with me at the important crisis that is now advancing, to pay your compliments to Mr. Adams, and endeavor to place him at the head of government—for who is so capable of governing as that Great Man who knows that the people are only fit to be governed . . . How contemptible are [Republican] principles when compared to the sublime principles of our favorite Adams. The end of society is to support the useless, and the institution of government is to secure to hereditary kings, and a hereditary nobility, the power of governing the Swinish Multitude . . . Should we be so happy as to make choice of Mr. Adams and add a little to his power, we might have in this country that complete system of government termed heredity. So good an opportunity ought not to be neglected."

"Daddy Vice, Daddy Vice," they sang to him, thinking of his book,

> "One may see in a trice
> The drift of your fine publication.
> As true as a gun
> The thing was just done
> To secure you a pretty high station.



Th. Jefferson

From an engraving by Hall

When you tell us of kings
And such pretty things,
Good mercy, how brilliant your page is!
So bright is each line
I vow now you'll shine
Like a Glow-worm to all other ages!"

Aside from that,

"John Adams has already had for eight years the pay of thirty-three dollars a day during the sessions of Congress . . . and three lucrative offices have been given, two to his son and one to his son-in-law. New Englandmen"—it was a Pennsylvanian talking—"are exclusively in possession of almost all the great offices in the Federal Government . . . Are you disposed to add to all this . . . by giving your votes to make a New Englandman President . . . that he may be enabled to give the few remaining places of trust and PROFIT . . . to other New Englandmen?"

And as for England and aristocrats—"Thomas Jefferson first drew the declaration of American independence; he first framed the sacred political sentence that all men are born equal. John Adams says this is all a farce and a falsehood; that some men should be born kings and some should be born nobles. Which of those, freemen of Pennsylvania, will you have for your President? Will you . . . contribute to make the avowed friend of monarchy President . . . Adams has sons who might aim to succeed their father"—one of them, in fact, did—"Jefferson, like

Washington, has no son. Adams is a fond admirer of the British Constitution . . . Jefferson likes better our Federal Constitution and thinks the British full of deformity, corruption and wickedness."

So it went—down to the gentleman who hoped that all the American foreign Ministers would be recalled.

"What good did Jay do us more than kissing the Queen's hand? And what good will Rufus King do us more than feathering his own nest . . . Etiquette! Confound the word, it ought not to be admitted into an American dictionary. Ought we to follow the fashions and follies of old corrupt courts? Are we not a young Republic? And ought we not to be plain and honest, and to disdain all their craft, pageantry and grimace?"

A most illuminating document; illustrative of the persistent American unwillingness to do in Rome as the Romans did, of the self-conscious disparagement of social amenities resorted to by a class of people whose acquaintance with them was still very generally negligible, of the complex of inferiority which quite evidently animated so much of the democratic, "plain and honest" uproar.

"It is also to be hoped," this Republican Chesterfield proclaimed, "that the next President will discontinue ridiculous levies"—he meant levees, of

course—"squaring the heel and toe and bowing like a country dancing master . . . aping old worthless sovereigns and courtiers, and all . . . for the sake of etiquette. Mr. Jefferson, should he be our next President, will doubtless trample under foot these baubles . . . He is elevated far above the nonsense of parade—mere adulation and asiatic servility are not to his taste."

And when he finally reached the President's House, Mr. Jefferson—who knew how to behave with courtesy and decorum when he chose—gave ear to the voice of his masters, the People, and abolished the social forms and usages current in both private and official society, substituting for them a hurlyburly of procedure and a negligence in dress which were the delight of his Republican constituents, the derision of his less rustic associates.

9

The Federalist pens, on their side, were no less busy, no less bitter, no less solemnly in earnest if occasionally more humorous.

The next French Minister, one correspondent supposed, would "state the primers, hornbooks and gingerbread alphabets of our children as openly menacing the dignity [of the Republic]. Our alphabet still conveys . . . many very anti-republican ideas. The letter E which stands for England precedes the

letter F, which is the initial of France, and what is still more dreadful and alarming, and perfectly LIBERTICIDE in its nature, K which stands for king or kingdom takes precedence . . . of R, the very first letter of the word republic."

Mr. Jefferson was a poltroon, a subsidizer of anonymous gazetteers, a trickster, a "half-learned" philosopher, a mere college professor, an inventor of whirligig chairs, an undignified mountebank, a demagogue, an apostle of anarchy, a Franco-maniac and an atheist.

"To their honor, be it said, the clergy of the United States are constantly exerting themselves in preaching down Deism and its fatal effects; while the Democrats and Jacobins (who now have the impudence to call themselves Republicans) are daily preaching in favor of Deism, or at least for a professed Deist (if not Atheist) for President . . . Let all who regard [the Christian religion] use their influence in promoting the choice of such Electors as will give us A CHRISTIAN PRESIDENT."

Mr. Jefferson's followers comprised

"the advocates for separate confederacies, the zealous partisans of unlimited sovereignty in the State governments—the never to be satiated lovers of innovation and change—the tribe of pretended philosophers, but real fabricators of chimeras and paradoxes . . . who, leading the dance to the tune of liberty

without law, endeavor to intoxicate the people with delicious but poisonous draughts, to render them the easier victims of their rapacious ambitions." His own "avowed enthusiasm . . . for the French Republic, and his disposition on all occasions to promote her interests, even at the expense of the United States, furnish . . . sufficient incitement to the partisans of France to exert all their influence to place him at the head of our Government."

And speaking of the French, "Alarm! Alarm!" a sarcastic Federalist exclaimed—in a somewhat remarkable manifesto ridiculing the abjectly Gallic tone of Republican politics, which one is tempted to quote at some length—

"Sons of Liberty, join me in a fervent prayer for our falling cause . . . Great Spirit of Democracy . . . thunder with thy thousand tongues, scribble with thy thousand hands—Damn the [Jay] Treaty, and the paper on which it is written, and the papermaker—damn the ship that brought it over, and the owner, and the crew—damn the negotiator, the arch fiend Jay; and O, sweet, benignant Spirit, damn, O doubly damn the President and Senate. Nor ye, Children of Democracy, be ye idle—come forward and sign petitions against this accursed instrument—sign them with your own names, the names of your children, your servants and all the names you have ever known or heard of . . .

"Frenchmen, let me address you. Whether ye be the inestimable portions of free will . . . or the re-

spectable tenants of gaols thrown down by the levelling arm of equality; whether ye be the blessed emissaries of anarchy, the human disciples of Robespierre, or the devout adorers of the Heaven descended guillotine; in a word, all true, noble, magnanimous Frenchmen, who, in defiance of Heaven and of humanity, have dared to assist the cause of liberty and justice by tossing the aristocratic infant [Louis XVII] to your dogs . . . come, ye bacchanals of liberty, America calls on your potent arms to save her. Once more, Frenchmen, she implores your protection from the fetters of an aristocracy more horrible than her English chains. Once more save us, or we fall . . .

"Ye Britons, too, let me address some of you. Whether your royal master has conveyed you from the country at the public expense . . . whether, inspired by the invincible genius of liberty, you have broken the strong walls of your prisons, or whether you have fled from the anticipated stroke of justice—I hail you welcome to our cause.

"Americans, I address you not. You have nothing to do with this dispute. It has been resolved, in a solemn convention of our societies"—the Democratic Societies—"that you are in no wise interested in the government or affairs of this country, and must therefore . . . be excluded from all counsel concerning them. We will manage for you, our better experience in French liberty should teach you to submit."

One begins to understand why, if Mr. Adams was scorned, Mr. Jefferson was hated. "Bonny Johnny"

was an aristocrat and a lover of kings, and Republican gorges rose—but "Mad Tom" was a Jacobin, the chosen slave of the "Terrible Republic" across the sea, the Robespierre of the American mob, and Federalist hearts quailed.

Mr. Adams's own ideas of government have been, in part, exposed; it is only just to glance at some of the contemporary political views of Mr. Jefferson which so distressed his adversaries.

"In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government," he wrote to Mr. Mazzei, in 1796, "an Anglican, monarchical and aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance, as they have already done the forms, of the British Government . . . It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot of England"—a reference to General Washington which Mr. Jefferson was at some pains, later, to explain away. "Against us [the Republicans] are the Executive, the Judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants and Americans trading on British capitals, speculators and holders in the banks and public funds, a contrivance invented for the purpose of corruption, and for assimilating us in all things to

the rotten as well as the sound parts of the British model."

Added to which "our country is too large," he told Gideon Granger, "to have all its affairs directed by a single government . . . And I do verily believe that if the principle were to prevail of a common law being in force in the United States . . . it would become the most corrupt government on the earth . . . Let the general government be reduced to foreign concerns only . . . a few plain duties to be performed by a few servants."

Later on, "banking establishments," he was to write, "are more dangerous than standing armies;" his foreign policy was that no policy was "worth a war;" his belief in the sovereignty of the States as opposed to the decrees of a general government were shortly to be expressed in the Kentucky Resolutions; his hatred of the Federal Judiciary was soon to become apparent.

"Bonny Johnny" and "Mad Tom"—to the Republicans the former was a monarchist, the latter, to the Federalists, a maniac.

10

The battle went on.

"Who can foresee the issue of this momentous election," Fisher Ames cried. "Some among us are so wicked as to justify the French, and others . . . so

unspeakably mean as to say we must choose a President that will conciliate that nation . . . [If] Jefferson should accept the Vice-Presidency . . . France would have a new magazine of disorganizing influence . . . Jefferson, I hope and trust, has the worst chance . . . His being Vice would be a formidable evil, if his pride would let him take it."

But Mr. Jefferson's pride was not involved; he wished it understood that in case of a tie he was not to be preferred to Mr. Adams—a piece of hypocrisy, according to Mr. Ames, which might "dupe very great fools, but it should alarm all other persons, as it shows a deep design, which neither shame nor principle will obstruct, to cajole and deceive the public," including Mr. Adams.

Finally the Electors met, and Mr. Adams had seventy-one votes—as President of the Senate he presided over the count and did not discuss the disputed validity of four Federalist Vermont ballots—Mr. Jefferson had sixty-eight, Mr. Pinckney fifty-nine and Colonel Burr thirty. The Electoral vote was remarkable only for the fact that one of the two Federalist Electors in Pennsylvania voted for Mr. Jefferson—the only case on record, probably, of such a betrayal of trust on the part of an Elector.

Mr. Adams was "the President by three votes," as the Republican gazettes scornfully proclaimed it, Mr. Jefferson was Vice-President, and "our Jacobins

say they are well pleased," Mr. Hamilton, who was anything but pleased, recorded,

"and that the lion and the lamb are to lie down together. Mr. Adams's personal friends talk a little in the same way . . . Skeptics like me quietly look forward to the event, willing to hope, but not prepared to believe. If Mr. Adams has vanity 'tis plain a plot has been laid to take hold of it."

As for Mr. Ames, the victory of Mr. Jefferson was, he thought,

"a most formidable danger . . . In a Senate that will bring him into no scrapes, as he will have no casting votes to give, responsible for no measures, acting in none that are public,he may go on affecting zeal for the people; combining the antis, and standing at their head, he will balance the power of the Chief Magistrate by his own. Two Presidents, like two suns in the meridian, [will] meet and jostle for four years, and then Vice [will] be first."

And Mr. Ames was right—but there were to be three suns in the meridian, for Mr. Hamilton's had not yet run its course.

And in the meantime another President was returning to Mount Vernon, and the Philadelphia *Aurora* called it a day of JUBILEE, and a subject of the greatest astonishment that a single individual "should have cankered the principles of republican-

ism" and "carried his designs against the public liberty so far as to have put in jeopardy its very existence." But such were the facts, in the opinion of the great Republican mouth organ, and

"the man who is the source of all the misfortunes of our country is this day reduced to a level with his fellow citizens, and is no longer possessed of power to multiply evils upon the United States. If ever there was a period for rejoicing, this is the moment. Every heart in unison with the freedom and happiness of the people ought to beat high with exultation that the name of Washington ceases from this day to give currency to political iniquity and to legalize corruption. A new era is now opening upon us, an era which promises much to the people, for public measures must now stand upon their own merits, and nefarious projects can no longer be supported by a name."

Perhaps, after all, it was simply that the good Republicans of America had grown a little weary of hearing Aristides called The Just.

The Mammoth of Democracy

1800

THE MAMMOTH OF DEMOCRACY

1800

1

"He was then," John Adams wrote of himself in 1813, "President for four years. A tale told by an Idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying Nothing."

The little old gentleman of Braintree—the "Duke of Braintree" they had called him—was not far wrong in his retrospective estimate of the turmoil of his Administration. Full of sound and fury—from James Callender to Alexander Hamilton—signifying, in the end, almost nothing. At the time it had seemed more vital.

It began during the first months of the Administration with the ejection from France of Minister Pinckney. It is not possible in these pages to follow in detail the complexities of that Franco-American dispute of 1797 and 1798—some aspects of it have already been discussed—the departure of the commissioners, the corrupt proposals of Citizen Talleyrand, the XYZ letters, the famous "Millions for defence,

not one cent for tribute!" slogan which swept the country into a passionately patriotic activity of war-like preparations, in the midst of a Republican tumult of condemnation for the "war hawks." It is necessary here to examine only certain incidents of that period which contributed to the sound and fury of the final Federalist disaster which was in store.

The affair of the new Major Generals, for instance. "I ought to have said No to the appointment of Washington and Hamilton," Mr. Adams decided long after, "and Yes to the appointment of Burr . . . and some others. I ought to have appointed Lincoln, and Gates, and Knox, and Clinton." But "with all my Ministers against me, a great majority of the Senate and House . . . I was no more at liberty than a man in prison." He was obliged to do what General Washington demanded, and the General was demanding what Mr. Hamilton suggested—Mr. Hamilton and what passed for Federalist public opinion, as expressed in the dictates of the New England Essex county "Junto" through their mouthpieces in the Cabinet, Secretary of State Pickering, Secretary of War McHenry and Secretary of the Treasury Wolcott. For when Mr. Adams had nominations of his own they were overruled; and when Mr. Adams insisted that General Knox should take precedence over General Hamilton who was his junior in service, General Washington threatened to resign; and when

Mr. Adams reluctantly acceded to the ultimatum it was General Knox who resigned instead.

For Mr. Hamilton could not bear to be ranked lower than Second in Command. He was ready to submit to an "impartial decision," but "there is a flood of evidence," he told General Washington, "that a great majority of leading Federal men were of the opinion that in the event of your declining the command of the army, it ought to devolve upon me, and that in case of your acceptance, which everybody ardently desired, the place of second in command ought to be mine." And "the illusions of self-love" apart, ought he to "postpone myself to others, in whose hands, according to that opinion, the public interests would be less well confided." He had already informed Mr. Pickering that he was not prepared to say "that I shall be satisfied with . . . the rank . . . of Major General, on the principle that every officer of high rank in the late army . . . is to be above me. I am frank to own that this will not accord with my opinion of my own pretensions, and I have every reason to believe that it will fall far short of public opinion."

Indeed, Mr. Hamilton was ready to take over some of the work of the War Department; "there is a matter," he confessed to General Washington, "which I must do violence to my friendship by stating to you . . . It is that my friend McHenry is wholly insuffi-

cient for his place, with the additional misfortune of not having himself the least suspicion of the fact." Mr. Hamilton had offered to assist him, "but the idea has thus far been very partially embraced." It was quite true, General Washington agreed with him, Mr. McHenry was not one to set the Schuylkill on fire—but it does not appear to have occurred to Mr. Hamilton as an impertinent impropriety that he, a subordinate in the new army, should attempt to assume any control over the affairs of the Secretary of War.

2

It did not occur to him because at no time did Mr. Hamilton consider himself a subordinate—Mr. Adams's Secretaries were simply his lieutenants—at no time did he ever hesitate to give advice and instruction. He had done so, and welcome, throughout General Washington's Administrations, it was his expectation to continue doing so throughout that of President Adams. The correspondence files of the early months of that presidency are filled with Mr. Hamilton's suggestions and demands—to Mr. Pickering, to Mr. McHenry, to Mr. Wolcott, to the Essex Junto, to members of Congress.

"Were I Mr. Adams . . . I should begin my presidency" by doing this and that—the French treaty "I want to get rid of"—"take my ideas," Mr. McHenry, "and weigh them of a proper course of

conduct for our Administration"—"when the Senate meets" have them do thus and so, about France, about the revenue, about commerce, about everything under the sun—"I want"—"I wish"—and of course "I write you this letter on your fidelity. *No mortal* must see it or know its contents." He even sent down to Philadelphia "a whole system of instructions for the conduct of the President, the Senate and the House of Representatives," which Senator Tracy had the temerity to lay before Mr. Adams.

This constitutional inability of Mr. Hamilton's to take a back seat was to have a large part in the disruption of the Federalist party—for the three Secretaries were his lackeys. He could not dictate to Mr. Adams—Mr. Hamilton soon found that out—but he had only to whisper and his three parrots talked. They were not especially brilliant men, these Secretaries; two of them had been given their places after several other selections had refused, and they were none of them of Mr. Adams's choosing. He had inherited them from General Washington—"Washington had appointed them and I knew it would turn the world upside down if I removed any one of them" —but he would have done far better to have rid himself of them in the beginning. For they were Hamilton men, Mr. Adams knew that, old military comrades two of them, all three of them beholden to Mr. Hamilton for their offices, all three of them trained

under General Washington in the school of deference and obedience to Mr. Hamilton.

It was to be a fatal arrangement for Mr. Adams. An extremely conceited, jealous, suspicious, irascible, arbitrary person, himself considerably to blame for much that followed—already profoundly hostile to Mr. Hamilton as a result of the latter's activities in recent presidential campaigns—it was inevitable that the presence in Mr. Adams's Cabinet of three officials who took their orders constantly from "The Bairn of Nevis," as the President called him—three officials who scorned their Executive, who continually wrote disparagingly of him, who judged his policy by the sole standard of its conformity with Mr. Hamilton's views, who submitted all their Cabinet transactions to the supervision of "the Creole" at New York —it was inevitable that so unthinkable and humiliating a situation should result in dreadful disaster.

For he was not entirely fatuous, Mr. Adams; he was not unaware, eventually, of the treachery in his official family; with all his faults of temperament he was energetic, determined and completely courageous—a fat little Samson who was not afraid, finally, to pull down his temple of the Philistines.

3

And in the meantime they were approaching a presidential election, and in Hamiltonian Federalist

circles Mr. Adams was not the man for candidate. That the rank and file of Federalism was not at all of this opinion—Mr. Adams was actually quite popular—was of no concern to Mr. Hamilton and his devoted clique, who detested the President as much as he despised them. They had assumed the dictatorship of the party, and a faction, a minority faction, ruled its councils. Mr. Adams was not amenable to their orders, his policy of conciliation towards France did not suit their military ambitions, and Mr. Adams must go. "During a late visit to New York," Gouverneur Morris was writing to General Washington in December, 1799, already, "I learnt that the leading characters, even in Massachusetts, consider Mr. Adams as unfit for the office he now holds."

What they were hoping was that General Washington would run again; they had approached him before, and in his letter Mr. Morris was once more urging that "the helm of affairs" be confided to the General's "steady hand." General Washington probably never read this last letter, as it could scarcely have reached Mount Vernon before his sudden death; but he had already replied to former hints that his candidacy would not "draw a single vote from the antifederal side." And so a caucus of Federalist members of Congress had to be held, early in 1800.

There seem to be no formal records of this "Jaco-

binical conclave," as the Philadelphia *Aurora* called it, but from subsequent private letters one learns the trend of the discussion and the final arrangement, the "compromise at Philadelphia" to which they were always referring. For "the leading friends of the Government" were "in a sad dilemma," according to Mr. Hamilton. Should they "risk a serious schism by an attempt to change, or . . . annihilate themselves and hazard their cause by continuing to uphold those who suspect and hate them?" The Hamiltonians would gladly have risked the schism—and had they done so openly then, they would have been less to blame—but sentiment was against it and Mr. Adams and General Pinckney, the brother of Thomas Pinckney, were named as candidates—with a distinct understanding.

Both gentlemen were to be run for the presidency, "without giving one a preference to the other," so it was reported by Mr. McHenry. And Fisher Ames understood that "it was known and allowed that Mr. Adams had conducted strangely and unaccountably, and that his reelection would be very inauspicious to the United States. But, great as that evil appeared, it was thought indispensably necessary to run the risk of it, and to agree fairly to vote for him and General Pinckney, because chance"—an election by the House after an equal Electoral vote—"might exclude the former, and because any other arrangement would, by dividing the party . . . absolutely secure the success of Mr. Jefferson; and because, also, many, perhaps

most, of the Federalists will believe it is better to have . . . Mr. Adams again than Mr. Jefferson."

There it was—the Hamiltonians had a way of betraying themselves in correspondence—many, perhaps most, Federalists wished to see Mr. Adams reelected, and the two candidates were to be equally supported. It was definitely so understood by the various State representatives. This was "the compromise at Philadelphia." Mr. Adams was to run again without opposition, and if General Pinckney equalled his Electoral vote all the better. But there must be no effort made in favor of one over the other. How the compromise was lived up to by the Hamiltonians will shortly become apparent.

And the Republicans had also held a caucus, but their difficulties were less perplexing. Mr. Jefferson, the "Mammoth of Democracy," was of course their first choice. As for the Vice-President, after a refusal from George Clinton, they turned to Colonel Burr. And here, again, a compromise may have been reached which has been unaccountably neglected in biographies of Aaron Burr. For "Mr. Burr required," Oliver Wolcott wrote afterwards to Henry Edwards, "as a condition of his consent to be their candidate, that highly respectable members of the Republican party should write letters, stating that their

honor was pledged to endeavor to procure for him an equal vote with Mr. Jefferson."

No preference was to be shown either of the Republican candidates either, and in the event of a successful equal Electoral vote the strongly Federalist House of Representatives would have to decide. On these terms Colonel Burr consented to run. In view of the great Republican uproar attendant upon Colonel Burr's subsequent "treachery," as they termed it, in opposing Mr. Jefferson in the tied vote contest of 1801 in the House, this statement of Mr. Wolcott's, if accurate, is of extraordinary importance.

It would appear that both party caucuses, in order to arrive at their nominations, subscribed to compromises which it was not their undivided intention to respect. For the Hamiltonians did their best, for a while, to ignore theirs, and it may be that Colonel Burr was eventually driven out of his party for having presumed to govern his actions by the other.

4

The campaign got under way, on a flood of scurrilous libels, of inane idiocies. All the old accusations of aristocracy, monarchism and British influence were screamed at the Federalists by the Republican press; all the stupidities concerning Mr. Jefferson's atheism and perverted scholarship were repeated by the Federalist gazettes. The public clamor does not,

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

From the Talleyrand miniature

perhaps, need to be reproduced in order to be appreciated.

When they managed to speak sanely, according to their political viewpoint, the Republicans argued for States' rights, for the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions—the Jeffersonian theory of "Nullification" which democracy under President Jackson, when the shoe was on the other foot, was to find so nefarious —for popular liberties, for non-intercourse except commercially with foreign nations; they attacked the alleged extravagance of the Administration, the army, the navy, the new Federal City at Washington; the foreign policy of the Hamiltonians which submitted to British impressments and rattled the sword at France—Mr. Jefferson's sword rattling at Spain and the disgrace of the *Chesapeake* episode were all in the unknown future—the contemptuous arrogance of the Federalists who made no attempt to conceal their faith in government by "men of information and property" and not by the ignorant, mischievous masses; and the famous Alien and Sedition laws which allowed the deportation, or confinement in time of war, of dangerous aliens, and the trial and punishment of sedition and libel.

The Reign of Terror, the Republicans called it, because a few individuals were perhaps too harshly pursued; and made martyrs of such infamous characters as James Callender when he was convicted of

shameful libel against the President. But then Mr. Callender was a protégé of Mr. Jefferson, who had read his proofsheets and written that "such papers cannot fail to produce the best effect; they inform the thinking part of the nation." Difficult words to explain away, which Mr. Jefferson may have recalled during his own presidency when Mr. Callender, whose fine he had even seen fit to remit, turned around and attacked him as viciously as he had been permitted to attack both General Washington and Mr. Adams.

That spirit of 1800 "which swept the Alien and Sedition laws from our statute book" was to be mentioned in every Democratic platform from 1840 to 1856; but "inasmuch," Mr. Stanwood points out, "as the Sedition Act and the first of the Alien laws expired by self-limitation before Jefferson took the oath of office, and since the second Alien law was never repealed . . . a commendation of the 'spirit which swept' them from the statute book involves a historical blunder." Or simply some of that sound and fury on which the spirit in question was nourished.

And while the Federalists were quarreling, and stabbing each other in the back, the Republicans were united, cheerful, aggressive and amazingly well organized. Their discipline, Mr. Ames wrote, "is as severe as the Prussian," and it was General Washington's opinion that they would vote for a "broomstick" if told to. So they came sweeping on, the People, the

champions of freedom and equality, and Mr. Jefferson, their leader, came with them. The victory, for victory it was to be, was the victory of democracy, of the righteous indignation of the Freemen of America against the despotism and corruption of privilege and caste.

Sound and fury.

5

Actually, certain other circumstances seem to have contributed very directly to the triumph.

In the first place, New York City, in May, 1800, unexpectedly went Republican, and, as it turned out, decided the election. "In N York," Mr. Jefferson had written in March, "all depends on the success of the city election . . . We may say that if the city election of N York is in favor of the Republican ticket the [national] issue will be Republican." Mrs. Adams understood it too. Writing afterwards of Mr. Adams's defeat, "the defection of New York," she said, "has been the source. That defection was produced by the intrigues of two men. One of them sowed the seeds of . . . division amongst the Federalists, and the other seized the lucky moment of mounting into power upon the shoulders of Jefferson."

Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. But of the latter Mr. Adams himself was later to say that

"Burr I never considered as my personal enemy. He would not have been my political enemy if Hamilton would have permitted Washington to allow me to nominate him . . . as a Brigadier in the army." The affair of the Generals again. And it was true; Colonel Burr, a soldier of renown in the Revolution, had eagerly sought an appointment in 1798 and had always resented the refusal of the Hamilton clique to consider him. Political destinies have depended on the snapping of far less slender threads. And "the most efficatious enemy . . . to be sure he was. By intriguing with Clintons and Livingstons against Hamilton he turned the State of New York and consequently the balance of the continent." And Colonel Burr's "Martlings," the young men of the Tammany Society, would have been inclined to say that but for Colonel Burr Mr. Jefferson could have whistled for New York and consequently for his presidency.

The dramatic features of the election are well known. The magnificent ticket—published after Mr. Hamilton's rather insipid, hand-picked list—which included John Broome, Brockholst Livingston, George Clinton and Horatio Gates, the fruit of Colonel Burr's incomparable shrewdness in the face of obstinate refusals and jealousies; the organizing of the Tammany Society as a political machine; the careful classification and recording for the first time of all

the voters in the city; Mr. Hamilton, on his white horse, riding through the wards on the turbulent election days, pleading against the Jacobin peril; Colonel Burr at the polls of the Seventh haranguing the crowds for ten hours on end while Matthew Davis remembered that he had not eaten for fifteen; Mr. Hamilton, after his defeat, writing frantically to Governor Jay, proposing that the election be ignored and the old Federalist Legislature summoned to pass a hasty law changing the method of selecting Electors —a letter which the Governor simply endorsed "a measure for party purposes which it would not become me to adopt." But Mr. Hamilton was ready to do anything to "save us from the fangs of Jefferson."

The loss of New York was a catastrophe to the Federalists—a terrible humiliation to the party dictator who was so busy managing the Cabinet that he could not control his own city—and down at Philadelphia a bedevilled little bald-headed gentleman flew into one of his fearful rages.

Mr. Adams had for some time been losing all patience with his precious Secretaries, whose duplicity and disloyalty he was now fully aware of. "The President," Mr. Wolcott virtuously complained to Mr. Ames in December, 1799, "considers Colonel Pickering, Mr. McHenry and myself his enemies; his resentments against General Hamilton are excessive;

he declares his belief of the existence of a British faction in the United States." The old Republican cry on the President's tongue!

It all arose from the dispute, in October, over the sending of new Commissioners to France. Mr. Adams was determined to avoid a real war with France, convinced that the national differences could be adjusted by negotiation, as, indeed, they ultimately were; the military clique of the Secretaries, backed up by the Federalist Junto and by Mr. Hamilton—who from his earliest days had fancied himself as a warrior and was now busily organizing his new army—were equally determined that the Commissioners should not sail. They opposed the President at a Cabinet meeting held in Trenton, through which city General Hamilton also happened on the same day to be passing; and the next morning Mr. Adams, as he had a perfect right to do, startled them into a rage by ordering the immediate departure of the envoys. Whether it was that Pennsylvania had just gone Republican and that Mr. Adams was seeking to placate the Republicans, or that he had finally made up his mind to assert himself before his Secretaries and confound Mr. Hamilton, or that, simply, it seemed to him the best move that he could make on behalf of his country—the decision, which called down upon him a tornado of Federalist sound and fury, "stands now," Mr. Channing states, "as one of the

most notable acts of a remarkable man." If only he had sent the Secretaries packing at the same time.

Now, in May, after the New York disaster, Mr. Adams completely lost his temper. The Secretaries, Mr. Hamilton—his accumulated exasperation was too much for him. He got it into his head that Mr. Hamilton had deliberately thrown away the New York election, which was unjust. He sent for Mr. McHenry—the least important because the most simple of the three—and flabbergasted that unsuspecting gentleman by demanding his resignation. Mr. Adams "became indecorous and at times outrageous," Mr. McHenry reported; he accused him of all manner of intrigues, some of them far too petty to have deserved Mr. Adams's attention; he exclaimed that Mr. Hamilton was just a foreigner like Mr. Gallatin, and that "Mr. Jefferson is an infinitely better man, a wiser one, I am sure, and, if President, will act wisely"—party treason by the President—"in short, there was no bounds to his jealousy." A few days later Mr. Adams called on Mr. Pickering for his resignation; the parsimonious Mr. Pickering refused to resign on the slightly inelegant ground that he could not afford to financially; and Mr. Adams immediately discharged him.

It was a stupid fracas because it lacked dignity; because it was developed in anger on the spur of the moment, whereas the dismissal should have taken

place long before, supported by the more valid and trenchant reasons which a dispassionate state of mind would have amply provided; and because it entirely exempted Mr. Wolcott who had been, and continued to be, far more treacherous to his Chief than Mr. McHenry had ever dreamed of being. In other respects, as far as it went, it was a most satisfying outburst. They have not a leg to stand on, these Secretaries. If they were so opposed to Mr. Adams, if the national welfare, as they claimed, required that they ignore him, they should have told him so and retired from his Cabinet. There is no possible justification for the hypocrisy, the obstructionism and the connivance which for three years they had exhibited.

They departed, two of them—the third still sat blandly in his Treasury—and the temple of the Philistines was brought down, and the little Samson under the ruins. Very pleased with himself, one imagines.

"Allow me to suggest," Mr. Hamilton ordered Mr. Pickering, "that you ought to take with you copies and extracts of all such documents as will enable you to explain both Jefferson and Adams. You are aware of a very curious journal of the latter when he was in Europe—a tissue of weakness and vanity."

One of the most illuminating, perhaps, of Mr. Hamilton's many unconsciously self-revelatory documents.

6

The affair, which Mr. Hamilton called "an explosion of combustible materials," definitely split the Federalists into "Adamites" and "Pickeronians."

In the opinion of the latter, Mr. Adams's behavior was evidence of an intended coalition between the Federalist President and the Republican Vice-President. Mr. Pickering himself was certain that the appointments of gentlemen to succeed him and Mr. McHenry had been made

"in concert with Mr. Jefferson, under whom, be assured, Mr. Adams, rather than not be in office, would serve as Vice-President. And mark my words, that whatever interest Mr. Adams shall take in the choice of Electors in Massachusetts, it will be to secure Mr. Jefferson's election and to exclude General Pinckney."

There were all sorts of circumstantial stories current, widely believed in high Federalist circles, to the effect that the dismissal of the Secretaries had been the price of Republican support for Mr. Adams; and the President was reported to have said that he "believed Mr. Jefferson to be more friendly towards him than many who professed to be his friends; and that he further believed Mr. Jefferson never had the ambition or desire to aspire to any higher distinction than to be his first lieutenant." A statement which, if authentic,

would indicate—as, indeed, quite a few believed—that Mr. Adams was losing his mind!

To all of which the Adamites replied, on behalf of the President, that these accusations were "false and malicious fabrications," and that Mr. Pickering and Mr. Hamilton were at the head of a British faction which had opposed his foreign policy because it wanted a war with France. To which the Pickeronians, in private, retorted that Mr. Adams must under no circumstances be President. Vice-President under General Pinckney, perhaps, but not President. "It is probable," Mr. Wolcott remarked, "that Mr. Jefferson's conduct would be frequently whimsical and undignified; that he would affect the character of a philosopher . . . but however dangerous the election of Mr. Jefferson . . . I do not perceive that any portion of the mischief would be avoided by the election of Mr. Adams."

And while he and his associates made a great show of supporting Mr. Adams and General Pinckney equally—and on the contrary accused the Adamites of working against the General—Mr. Hamilton was in full agreement with the Pickeronians.

"For my individual part," he wrote in May, "my mind is made up. I will never more be responsible for [Adams] by my direct support, *even though the consequence should be the election of Jefferson.* . . . Under Adams, as under Jefferson, the Government will

sink . . . If the cause is to be sacrificed to a weak and perverse man, I withdraw from the party and act upon my own ground . . . The only way to prevent a fatal schism . . . is to support General Pinckney in good earnest. If I can be perfectly satisfied that Adams and Pinckney will be upheld in the East . . . on the ground of conformity I will . . . pursue the same plan. If not, I will pursue Mr. Pinckney as my single object."

They were to be loud in their denials, the Hamiltonians, that they had conspired against Mr. Adams —had they not always advocated an equal support of both candidates, had not Mr. Hamilton toured New England for that very purpose—but their own correspondence betrays them. "It may become advisable," Mr. Hamilton informed Charles Carroll, "for the Middle States to declare that Mr. Adams will not be supported at all; when seeing his success desperate [New England] would be driven to adhere to Pinckney," and "in the meantime it is not advisable that Maryland should be too deeply pledged to . . . Mr. Adams." It sounds innocent enough—an attempt to force a full Pinckney vote from New England, which might otherwise scatter its ballots in order to insure the presidency for Mr. Adams, and in so doing assist Mr. Jefferson's chances; but the observations of some of Mr. Hamilton's own

henchmen reveal what was going on behind the scenes.

"I am convinced," a New Jersey Federalist told Mr. Wolcott, "we must not be even suspected of having anything further in view than the running of Mr. A. or Mr. P. I believe that a public avowal of a design to drop or oppose the first gentleman would cause the loss of any ticket actuated by these principles . . . It would never be believed but that [the French] treaty formed the true objection [to Mr. Adams]; that the Federalists wishing war with France opposed him . . . But if we use a prudent silence we shall get in our ticket of Electors, and if I am not deceived, they will be men who will do right in the vote . . . Mr. P. will be the man of their choice. They will act . . . in conformity with the plan proposed in Philadelphia, and if the Eastern States will unite in a more . . . decisive system they will not desert them. But they will not be prepared to say that they prefer J. to A."

Mr. Ames, too, had things to say to Mr. Hamilton.

"It is manifestly impossible," he pointed out, "to get votes enough for General P. to prevent the choice of Mr. Jefferson, in case he should be supported in open hostility to Mr. A. . . . Then why should we ground any plan of conduct on a known impracticability of its execution? By taking the course of open hostility . . . we are at issue with all the Federalists who would not join us, and . . . would ascribe the

certain ill success of the party to us and not to the Jacobins. They would say *we* make Mr. Jefferson President, and the vindictive friends of Mr. A. would join in the accusation." The only thing to do was to say "President Adams has not our approbation . . . nor do we desire his reelection, but many Federalists do and the only chance to prevent the triumph of the Jacobins is to unite and vote according to the compromise made at Philadelphia for the two candidates."

And of all people Mr. McHenry—an honest soul, left to his own devices—spoke his mind to Mr. Wolcott.

"Have our party," he enquired, "shown that they possess the necessary skill and courage to deserve to be continued to govern? What have they done . . . Their conduct even now . . . in most if not all of the States is tremulous, timid, feeble, deceptive and cowardly. They write private letters. To whom? To each other, but they do nothing to give a proper direction to the public mind . . . They meditate in private. Can good come out of such a system? If the party recovers its pristine energy and splendor, shall I ascribe it to such cunning, paltry, indecisive, backdoor conduct? Certainly I shall not . . ."

7

As the summer went by Mr. Hamilton realized that he could not hope to elect General Pinckney at

the expense of Mr. Adams, but his determination to harm Mr. Adams did not diminish. The President's references to the British faction infuriated him; "if this cannot be counteracted, our characters are the sacrifice," he warned Mr. Wolcott, and told Mr. McHenry that they must expose Mr. Adams or else "we have the air of mere caballers and shall be completely run down in the public opinion." He had in vain written to the President for an explanation, and he was convinced that it was "essential to inform the most discreet . . . of the facts which denote unfitness in Mr. Adams." They must "declare the motives of our dislike, the exposition of these is very important—but how?" It was impossible for Mr. Hamilton to do it "without its being conclusively inferred that as to very material facts I must have derived my information from members of the Administration."

And Mr. Ames agreed with him; "I am . . . clear that *you* ought not, with your name, nor, if practicable in any way that will be traced to *you,* to execute your purpose of exposing the reasons for a change of the Executive." But Mr. Hamilton simply had to do it. He was helped to his decision, no doubt, by a most unfortunate occurrence, as a result of which Mr. Adams was again made responsible for allegations of British inclinations, this time against the Pinckneys! They appeared in a confidential letter

written in 1792 to Tench Coxe, suggesting that Thomas Pinckney's appointment as Minister to England had been due to English influence. Mr. Coxe, who had recently been discharged from the Treasury, saw fit to publish the letter, and all the sound and fury began again. Mr. Adams retracted the charge, but Mr. Hamilton's last straw had been reached.

He wrote, and published in pamphlet form, an astonishing attack on the President, entitled *The Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq.,* in which he condemned his official acts, referred to "the disgusting egotism, the distempered jealousy and the ungovernable indiscretion of Mr. Adams's temper," spoke of him as "a man of an imagination sublimated and eccentric," possessed of the "foibles of a vanity without bounds and a jealousy capable of discoloring every object"—an indictment which Mr. Adams freely admitted in his diary, calling himself at times "weak, silly, vain, conceited, ostentatious"—and complained that the President, unlike "the modest and sage Washington," would take no advice from his Ministers. It is perhaps unnecessary to enlarge upon the sublime impertinence of this last remark. The pamphlet was to be privately distributed in the South, for the delectation and instruction of leading Federalists, and closed with the

incongruous plea that Mr. Adams be supported with General Pinckney.

Unfortunately, on the morning of its publication, that terrible Colonel Burr got his hands on a copy and sent it to the Republican gazettes. All of Mr. Hamilton's fat was in the fire, and the country rang with loud Republican guffaws. Coming at a time when both parties were reviling each other in the most delightfully virulent manner—pouring out that "spicissitude of black liquor" which Mr. Adams was to recall for many years—the unpardonable document, for which Mr. Hamilton might well have been prosecuted under the Sedition Act no matter how unfit for his office Mr. Adams can be said to have been, brought forth a hurricane of replies. "The Last Speech and Dying Words of Alexander Hamilton"—"Hamilton's Last Letter and His Amorous Vindication," a reminder of the amazing public confession of his adulterous dealings with Mrs. Reynolds, in which "Hamilton rather than be peculator acknowledged he was a rank old fornicator"—the unspeakable Mr. Cheetham's verbal garbage—from all sides the fury was turned upon "Alexander Pamphlet."

Mr. Adams did nothing. Six years later, in private letters, he remarked that he had

"read with tranquility and suffered to pass without animadversion in silent contempt the base insinuations

of vanity and a hundred lies besides, published . . . against me by an insolent coxcomb, who rarely dined in good company where there was good wine without getting silly and vaporing about his administration . . . This creature was in the delirium of ambition . . . and he hated every man . . . who stood in his way, or could in any manner eclipse his laurels or rival his pretensions." The Adamses never minced words.

"He took advantage of a moment of fermentation wickedly excited by himself and his fellow conspirators to come out with the most false, malicious and revengeful libel that was ever written. To this he had no provocation but because I would make peace with France and could not in conscience make him commander in chief of an army of fifty thousand men. But this caitiff too came to a bad end. Fifteen years of continual slanders against Burr, great numbers of which I heard myself, provoked a call to the Field of Honor, as they call it, and sent him . . . to his long home by a Pistol Bullet through his spine."

Mr. Hamilton, for his part, prepared a second edition and asked Mr. Pickering for "new anecdotes" about Mr. Adams. "You probably possess some which are unknown to me. Pray let me have them without delay."

8

And now in the States they were voting, with considerable flimflam on both sides.

In Virginia, the Republicans amended the district

system law in order to deliver the State unanimously to Mr. Jefferson. In Massachusetts, the Federalist General Court sat in specially summoned session in order to empower itself to choose the Electors. In Pennsylvania, both factions were at it. The Republicans waited until the next State election should give them "a decided majority in the two houses when joined together," so Mr. Jefferson outlined the situation, when it was the intention of Governor McKean "to call the legislature to meet immediately after the new election to appoint electors themselves;" the Senate, which remained Federalist by thirteen to eleven, blocked the scheme, finally, by insisting that each House select eight men and that they vote jointly on fifteen of them—as a result of which, naturally, eight Republican and seven Federalist Electors were appointed. The affair made a great stir, and "the Noble Eleven" and "the Federal Thirteen" were enthusiastically celebrated by their respective adherents.

"The Federal Thirteen deserve the praises and the blessings of all America," one Federalist gazette proclaimed. "They have checked the mad enthusiasm of a deluded populace and the wicked speculation of designing demagogues . . . It may be figuratively said They have saved a falling world!" Very figuratively—but for a time the Administration press was positive of victory.

And South Carolina, after repeated promises to the contrary, went solidly Republican. There was some attempt made to split the vote between Mr. Jefferson and General Pinckney, but the General would not countenance this arrangement, and all eight Electoral ballots were cast for Mr. Jefferson and Colonel Burr. It is not known definitely what took place—perhaps the Tench Coxe letter had something to do with it—but the Jefferson campaign manager in South Carolina was Charles Pinckney, a cousin of the other Federalist Pinckneys, whom Mr. Jefferson later sent as Minister to Spain; and to him must apparently be ascribed the success of his party ticket.

At all events, when the Electoral votes were tabulated, the Republican candidates had each seventy-three, Mr. Adams had sixty-five, General Pinckney sixty-four and Mr. Jay the one withheld from the General.

The triumphant Republican clamor began at once, in a riot of "festivals" and banquets proclaiming that "the reign of terror is past—the dawn of the republican millenium appears in view—and the clouds of aristocracy are passing away as the vapors of the morning."

In fact—

> "The gloomy night before us flies,
> The Reign of Terror now is o'er;

Its gags, inquisitors and spies,
Its herds of harpies are no more.
Rejoice, Columbia's sons, rejoice,
To tyrants never bend the knee,
But join with heart and soul and voice,
For Jefferson and Liberty!"

The Sun of Federalism had set, it seemed, for ever; and, while the Federalists sourly retorted that the Moon of Democracy was evidently risen in its stead —that the Eagle of Freedom had been replaced by an Owl, and that the economical Mr. Jefferson would no doubt send his laundry to Monticello to be washed by his slaves—the Republicans came rolling home at night from the taverns roaring—

"Calumny and falsehood in vain raise their voice
To blast our republican's fair reputation;
But Jefferson still is America's choice,
And he will her liberties guard from invasion . . .
At freedom's fair temple see Jefferson stand,
Unawed and unmoved by the thunder of faction;
Let all true Americans join heart and hand,
And witness this day their heartfelt satisfaction.
His much honored name,
And his virtue and fame,
In triumphant strains to the world we'll proclaim."

And there it was—the "Mammoth of Democracy" was elected, a victorious People had "swept" him into the presidency, the great Voice of America had made itself heard.

Actually the people had not so much to do with

it, in some States nothing at all. In the three pivotal States, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and New York, sentiment was so evenly balanced that a change of a few hundred votes would have elected Mr. Adams. In New York, some two hundred and fifty votes only saved the Republicans. In 1796 Mr. Adams had secured the vote of New York, in 1800 he lost it; leaving that vote out of consideration in a comparison of both elections, Mr. Adams received, from the rest of the country, six more Electoral votes in 1800 than he did in 1796, Mr. Jefferson seven less—with one Maryland Elector absent.

There, perhaps, is the most remarkable feature of the election of 1800. Mr. Adams was perfectly right, it was all "sound and fury, signifying nothing." His foreign policy, his defects of temperament, his quarrel with the Secretaries, the Alien and Sedition laws, the Adamites and the Pickeronians—when the turmoil was over these things did not really matter at all. Except in New York, Mr. Adams was more popular, more successful throughout the country than he had been four years before, Mr. Jefferson less so. The election was decided by those twelve New York Electoral votes—six of them would have sufficed Mr. Adams—and those votes were obtained for Mr. Jefferson in the city election for assemblymen. And that election, in turn, was won by two hundred and fifty votes, because Colonel Burr was a smarter poli-

tician than Mr. Hamilton—who, had he not been so busy campaigning for General Pinckney and selecting New York assemblymen subservient to his views, might have sent the Martlings flying. And back of it all, it may well be, an angry little Colonel who had hoped, in 1798, to be a General, and whom the Hamiltonian clique had snubbed.

In such a manner, without landslides and only by the closest margins—an upset in South Carolina and a miracle in New York—was the "Mammoth" elected.

9

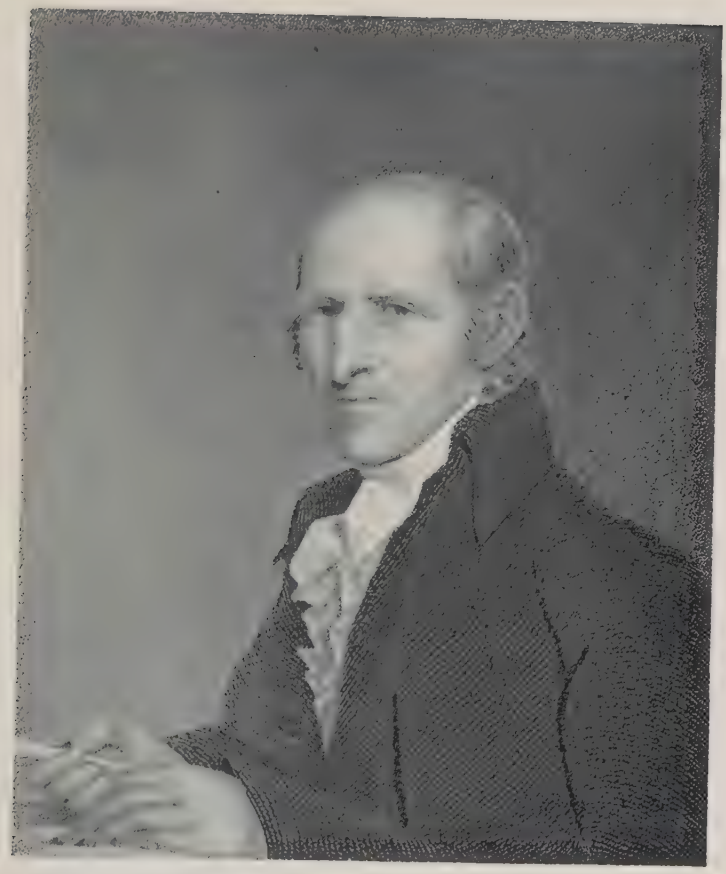
And he was not yet elected either, not President, for the Republicans had lived up to their caucus compromise—or else the South Carolina Elector who was supposed to scatter one vote forgot to do so—in any case Mr. Jefferson and Colonel Burr were tied. The House of Representatives, voting by States unanimously, or blank if evenly divided, must in February select the President, and the House was strongly Federalist—a pleasant irony, this Federalist majority forced to choose between two Republican candidates—and the Federalists were obstinately making up their minds to favor Colonel Burr. The lesser of two evils.

Mr. Hamilton was in a frenzy, writing long screeds to his partisans urging them to vote for Mr. Jefferson and accusing Colonel Burr—whom he dreaded

more than he hated the "Mammoth"—of every dastardy, both public and private; Mr. Jefferson himself was in a good deal of a panic. It had never occurred to him that he might not be President; on December 14, 1800, he was already writing a flattering letter to that influential New York Republican, Robert Livingston, offering him the new Secretaryship of the navy, and assuring him that it was essential to assemble in the Cabinet persons "whose talents, integrity and revolutionary names and principles" would inspire confidence, and that "these names do not abound at this day; so few are they, that yours, my friend, cannot be spared . . . without leaving a blank which cannot be filled"—a strange concern in names on the part of the supposed representative of "the men of no importance;" on December 15 he was writing another flattering letter to Colonel Burr, discussing with him the States in which votes might yet be dropped from the Colonel and regretting that "what seems to have been left to hazard" had not been "arranged with certainty"—Mr. Jefferson, evidently, had never heard of any caucus compromise—and informing him that his anticipated election to the vice-presidency left "a chasm in my arrangements which cannot be adequately filled." A most uncomplimentary compliment, incidentally, since it implied that Mr. Jefferson had not even expected the Colonel to secure the vice-presidency.

Now, in January, these blanks and these chasms were forgotten while Mr. Jefferson penned his frequent alarms lest "the true expression of the public will," concerning which he, for one, had no doubts whatever, be thwarted. What could be done to avert the calamity? Should they call a convention to amend the constitution—should he and Colonel Burr govern jointly for a while until something could be arranged—Mr. Jefferson was full of eager ideas, and when the Federalists threatened to prevent any vote until March 4, when a new election would have to be held, Mr. Jefferson, the man of peace, was all for an appeal to arms. "We thought it best to declare," he told Mr. Monroe, "that the day such an act passed, the middle States would arm, and that no such usurpation, even for a single day, should be submitted to. This first shook [the Federalists]; and they were completely alarmed at the resource for which we declared, to wit, a convention to reorganize the government and to amend it." And no wonder.

Of course the Federalist scheme was unjustifiable; the Republicans were victorious and one of them must be chosen; and in general Republican circles Mr. Jefferson was unquestionably the preferred nominee; but all this sound and fury from Monticello is not without humor. As for Colonel Burr, he had written one letter on December 16, announcing that he would not be "instrumental in counteracting the wishes and



T Pickering.

TIMOTHY PICKERING
From an engraving by Welch

the expectations of the United States," and that he "would utterly disdain competition" with Mr. Jefferson. After that he did nothing and kept his mouth shut. He was in Albany, his daughter was shortly to be married there, he did not reach Washington until just in time for the Inauguration in March. "The Federalists," Mr. Jefferson wrote in January, "were confident . . . they could debauch Colonel Burr . . . by offering him their vote to be President . . . His conduct has been honorable and decisive, and greatly embarrasses them."

Very greatly, for the Colonel could have been elected on the first count if he had been willing to lift a finger for himself. "Had Burr done anything for himself," Judge Cooper recorded while the House was balloting, "he would long ere this have been President. If a majority would answer"—instead of a vote by States—"he would have it on every vote;" and "the means existed of electing Burr," Mr. Bayard of Maryland reported to Mr. Hamilton, "but this required his co-operation." Colonel Burr "would not assist us," Mr. Bayard again later testified. "I never did discover that Mr. Burr used the least influence to promote the object we had in view . . . [I] never did think that he interfered, even to the point of personal influence, to obstruct the election of Mr. Jefferson or to promote his own." And on the last day the Federalist fight for Colonel Burr was aban-

doned, Mr. Baer of Maryland remembered, because "there was no evidence of any effort on the part of himself or his personal friends to procure his election."

There was to be a great Republican ballyhoo afterwards, led by those hyenas of the press Duane and Cheetham, proclaiming that Colonel Burr had intrigued to secure the presidency, and that Mr. Jefferson had sat with folded hands while this "treachery" was in progress. Mr. Jefferson himself said that "many attempts have been made to obtain terms and promises from me. I have declared to them unequivocally that I would not receive the government on capitulation, that I would not go into it with my hands tied." Of the truth of the charges against Colonel Burr, leaving out of consideration the possible caucus compromise, one may judge from the letters and affidavits of those men most involved in the Federalist effort to elect him. As regards Mr. Jefferson, one cannot entirely ignore the statement of Mr. Baer—one of the six Federalists who controlled the destinies of the final vote—to the effect that the ballots of Vermont, Delaware and Maryland were finally changed because "assurances" had been received "from a source in which we placed reliance that our wishes with regard to certain points of Federal policy . . . would be observed in case Mr. Jefferson was elected."

Nor can one entirely ignore—even in the face of

Mr. Jefferson's denials—the sworn deposition of Mr. Bayard, in which he testified that an arrangement had been entered into with Mr. Jefferson to give him the election if he would promise to retain, among others, a certain George Latimer as Collector of the Port of Philadelphia; and that, moreover, General Smith of Maryland had seen Mr. Jefferson in person concerning this matter, and that Mr. Jefferson had authorized him to confirm the proposed appointments. And in the midst of a rabid ousting of Federalist office holders, Mr. Latimer did retain his post, while the Philadelphia *Aurora* roared that "In the name of God, what have we Republicans been contending for, if Federalists are to hold the offices?"

10

The House balloted, twenty-eight times during the first twenty-four hours—while Congressmen snored in their seats and sent out for pillows and nightcaps—eight times more during the next four days. On each ballot Mr. Jefferson had eight States, Colonel Burr six, with Vermont and Maryland blank. With the exception of Massachusetts, all of Colonel Burr's States were unanimously for him; only three of Mr. Jefferson's, Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee, gave him a solid vote. In New York and New Jersey his margin of success was three votes in fifteen cast. Outside, in the ramshackle, unfinished city of Wash-

ington, men slept fifty at a time in their greatcoats on the floors of lamentable taverns, and went storming through muddy streets clamorous with processions, uneasy with panic laden rumors.

Finally, when it became evident to the Federalists that nothing would ever be accomplished unless Colonel Burr bestirred himself, Mr. Bayard "came out with the most explicit and determined declaration of voting for Jefferson. You cannot well imagine the clamor and vehement invective to which I was subjected for some days." But it had to be done. On the thirty-sixth ballot Vermont and Maryland went over to Mr. Jefferson, Delaware and South Carolina turned in blanks. Outside of New England all the Federalist members abstained from voting. Mr. Jefferson had ten States, and "this terminated the memorable contest."

"By a mode of election," Federalist Mr. Sedgwick complained, "which was intended to secure to preeminent talent and virtues the first honors of our country"—the sentence is a perfect epitome of the Federalist conception of government—

"we have, at one election, placed at the head of our government a semi-maniac, and who in his soberest senses is the greatest marplot in nature"—Mr. Adams —"and at the next a feeble and false, enthusiastic theorist"—Mr. Jefferson—"and a profligate without

character and without property, bankrupt in both"—Colonel Burr.

And if in 1797 the Republicans had dubbed Mr. Adams the President by Three Votes, in 1801 the Federalists, thinking of all those blank ballots in the House, called Mr. Jefferson the President by No Votes.

Elsewhere, throughout the country, there was a din of guns and bells, a flare of bonfires, and the Republican masses—who may or may not have constituted a majority of the population—were singing:

"Hark, the echoes of joy, how they ring through the land!
Avaunt, ye pale tyrants, 'tis Freedom's strong voice.
On the hills of Columbia she fixes her stand
And proclaims the glad tidings and this is her choice:
Lo! Jefferson bright,
Fill up the bumper—that's right—
Here's his health, we'll support him, if needful we'll fight;
But in Union and Harmony we wish to combine,
And kneel with devotion at Liberty's shrine."

Everywhere they were singing.

"The daring Feds have tried, but all in vain,
To hold the sword of power another reign;
But better stars determined the event,
And Jefferson's elected President.
In spite of fraud, chicane and every art
That could be practiced on the human heart,
The man of science, morals and good will
Must the first station in the Union fill.

'Tis welcome news to every freeman's heart,
Although aristocratic Feds must smart;
Their insolence demands retaliation,
But patriots disdain such degradation."

That was just before the removals from office began. And still they were singing.

"See the Hamiltonian Feds,
How they hang their jawlocked heads,
Mourning now their fallen chief
In whom they hoped to find relief—
Who with an army at command
Thought soon to rule this happy land.
But now their hopes are all destroyed,
Their wicked schemes are null and void;
The Federal rats have left the ship
And we in turn will take a trip . . .
The year of jubilee is come,
Return, ye British agents, home,
For we in turn will rule the roast,
And make a Jefferson the boast."

That was just after the removals from office began. And when they were not singing they were banqueting, as at Germantown where "joy, tempered with mild discretion, beamed on every countenance," and "after having spent the day in decent hilarity and rational mirth, they departed at an early hour"—with sixteen toasts under their belts, accompanied by martial music, volleys of musketry and cheers.

And of course one for "Sandy"—the Rogues'

March, "three pops, three groans, one glass water" for "Alexander Hamilton; few men have done more to promote the election of Thomas Jefferson. The Devil should have his due."

11

Mr. Adams, peevishly it seemed, went rolling out of Washington during the night of March 4, but preferring not to appear in public at the Inauguration because of the recent death of his son at New York; the "deepest affliction of my life," he wrote to Mr. Jefferson afterwards, and wished him "a quiet and prosperous" Administration. "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists," Mr. Jefferson hopefully exclaimed, firm in his optimistic conviction "that the whole body of Federalists concurred with the Republicans in the last elections and with equal anxiety . . . and I verily believe they will remain embodied with us." And "I leave to posterity," Abigail Adams remarked, "to reflect upon the times past, and I leave them characters to contemplate"—the whole retinue of Republicanism.

The sound and fury were over.

There remained the human comedy of the next eight years. The hurraings and flattery of the early months, and the hootings and scorn of the last Embargo days; the condemnation of the Alien and Sedition laws, and the arbitrary rigors of the later

"attainders," leading up to the severities of the Force Acts; the contempt for the previous Administration's subservience to England, and the subsequent epistolary vacillation in the face of accumulated British insults; the proposed championship of all the liberties, and the forthcoming vicious, personal, Executive prosecution of Aaron Burr for an act of alleged treason of which the Chief Justice of the United States found himself bound to acquit him on three occasions—the repeated assaults on the Federal Judiciary, by means of impeachments which even had in view that same Chief Justice because his decisions did not coincide with the desires of the President—the flagrant attempt to suspend the privilege of *habeas corpus,* in order that political prisoners arrested by a military dictator might be retained in further outrageous custody; the much proclaimed horror of tyrants and despots, and the final emergence of a vindictive, petulant, autocratic personality such as was seldom again to be experienced in the history of the presidency.

All the gay Jeffersonian paradoxes, the inevitable contradictions of democracy victorious, in whose hands, as in those of any other ruling group—wisely or not, according to the degree of intelligence of which an indiscriminate majority is capable—government must perforce be in some respects oppressive or it ceases to operate; illuminated by the permanent

achievement of the unintentional purchase of Louisiana, and the fortunate presence of those two excellent gentlemen, Mr. Madison and Mr. Gallatin. For there were still "men of information and property" in the government; the "republican tack" on which the ship of state was sailing represented a political change of course only; there yet prevailed, for all the popular outcry against them, a certain tradition, a certain seemliness, a certain dignity in public affairs.

The complete social and intellectual triumph of democracy was still in store.

The Friends of General Jackson

1824 and 1828

THE FRIENDS OF GENERAL JACKSON

1824 and 1828

I

Mr. Monroe was in his second presidential term; for twenty years the Republican Virginians—Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison, Mr. Monroe—had sat in the President's House; in New England, in New York, they were, they had been for some time, a little weary of the Dynasty. In 1804, New England had talked of secession; in 1808, Mr. Jefferson's protégé, James Madison, had had difficulty in getting himself elected; in 1812, a young New York politician called Martin Van Buren had done his best to send De Witt Clinton to Washington. Mr. Monroe had proved irresistible—he had secured all the Electoral ballots but one in 1820—but when the candidates announced themselves for the presidential campaign of 1824, Rufus King, for instance, was prepared to support John Quincy Adams, a deserter from the Federalist ranks, simply because "he is the only northern candidate, and as between him and the black [southern] candidates I prefer him."

Except as surviving individuals, the Federalists had practically ceased to exist. The Hartford Convention and their earlier promiscuous coalitions, with Aaron Burr, with De Witt Clinton, had only helped to diminish their prestige. Mr. Jefferson's Republicans were firmly in power—one faction or another seeking the advantage, the Livingstons, the Clintons, the followers of John Randolph, the new men in Congress, John Calhoun, Henry Clay—but now they were calling themselves Democrats, and it was a curious thing how unrepublican, how Federalist almost, they had become with the years. They talked quite freely of a loose construction of the Constitution —Mr. Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana had taught them that—and they supported the right of the Federal Government to effect internal improvements; they had incorporated a Bank of the United States, without falling into a fit at the recollection of Alexander Hamilton; they were advocating high tariffs and protection, and Mr. Calhoun and the South approved them, for a while.

In other respects, too, they had travelled a long way from Mr. Jefferson's original republicanism. The election of 1800 had been a victory of the "people," a triumph over "despotism" and "aristocracy"—but Mr. Jefferson's own Administrations had been as despotic as one could wish, and the term Dominion of Virginia had two meanings in many minds; Mr.

Jefferson's successors, in their mode of life, their social habits and their intellectual attitude, had shown no lack of aristocratic instinct. The Madisons had restored the presidential levees and pomps; the Monroes had brought fastidious elegance to their régime; the business of government remained primarily an occupation for gentlemen; the people at large had no more to do with it than the man in the moon.

They sent representatives to Congress; their Electors were now required to specify presidential and vice-presidential selections; they could grumble at the Congressional caucus system of nominating candidates which still prevailed. In Washington there was glitter and ceremonial, a profusion of French bric à brac at the White House, a great nodding of turbans and feathers in drawing rooms. A tremendous concern over the precedence accorded to foreign Ministers at state dinners, over the intricacies of "etiquette visiting" between the ladies of Congress. The days of Mr. Jefferson's republican simplicity—of the "principle of equality or *pele mele*" instituted by him for the purpose of preventing "the growth of precedence out of courtesy"—those days were quite forgotten.

Now, in the early 1820s, there was no division of parties, scarcely any controversy of national issues. It was the Era of Good Feeling; the matter of slavery in the new State of Missouri, which had flared up for

a while, had been settled by the adoption of the Missouri Compromise; one spoke of the tariff, of internal improvements, of the evils or advantages of the Congressional caucus system. "King Caucus"—the subject was on every tongue, in every newspaper, before every State Legislature.

Were Congressional caucuses to continue selecting dynasties of presidential candidates—there was every variety of heated opinion on the question—and in the meantime, in 1822, there were already some sixteen aspirants for Mr. Monroe's office, preening themselves more or less conspicuously in the public view.

2

By the end of the year ten of these candidates had found oblivion. There remained in the race John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts—the son of President John Adams—Secretary of State; William Crawford of Georgia, Secretary of the Treasury; John Calhoun of South Carolina, Secretary of War; Henry Clay of Kentucky, lately and soon again Speaker of the House of Representatives; General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee, the "Hero of New Orleans"; and De Witt Clinton of New York. All of them, with the exception of Mr. Adams—for Mr. Clinton was before long to fall by the wayside—from the South and Southwest; all of them members of the same political family, professing in general the

same political principles, enlisting support primarily on the basis of individual preferences.

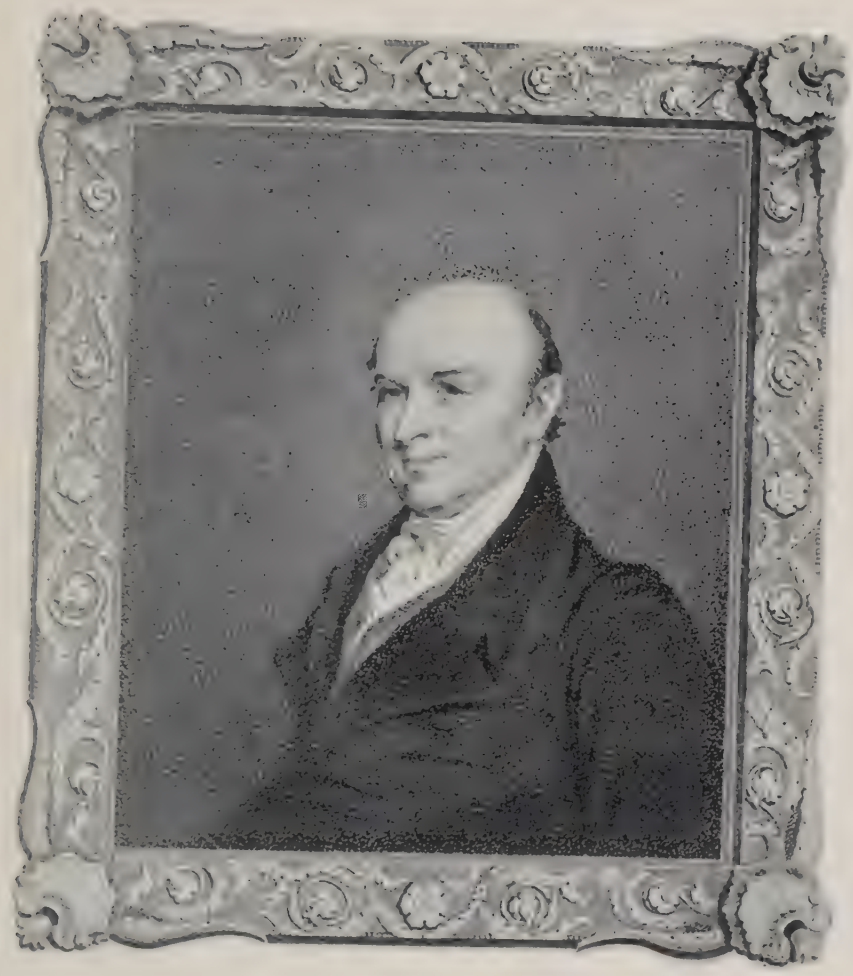
Of them all, Mr. Adams had the most brilliant record of public service—as a Senator, as a Minister to Holland, to Prussia, to Russia and to England, and as a Cabinet officer—and was probably the least popular; Mr. Clay and Mr. Calhoun had their careers and their followings; General Jackson had the adulation of the Southwest and the devotees everywhere of his military fame; he had served obscurely for two years in Congress, during the Administration of John Adams, he had held various State offices, he had won notable military battles, and he had been a tempestuous and irascible Governor of Florida; he was on good terms with Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Adams, antagonistic to Mr. Crawford and Mr. Clay.

Mr. Crawford was widely recognized as the "Administration" candidate; although he was to quarrel personally with Mr. Monroe, he was understood to have the President's support; Mr. Jefferson wrote of him that while Mr. Adams was "presumed to be" a Federalist at heart, Mr. Crawford was "a Republican of the old school, and a friend to the barrier of State rights as provided by the Constitution against the danger of consolidation." Mr. Adams, for his part, found that "the organization of newspaper support for Mr. Crawford throughout the Union is very extensive, and is managed with much address.

Democracy, Economy and Reform are the watchwords for his recruiting service—Democracy to be used against me, Economy against Calhoun and Reform against both."

Mr. Calhoun was organizing "a counter system of newspaper artillery," and "these engines will counteract each other, but I shall be a mark for both sides," Mr. Adams confided to his diary, "and, having no counter fire upon them"—the New Englander would not stoop to a hired press—"what can happen but that I must fall? This fall may be the happiest event that could befall me."

In the meantime, Mr. Crawford was in sympathy with the Congressional caucus, and here was something to bite on. Not unmindful, perhaps, of the fact that the old Congressional method of nominating candidates would greatly favor Mr. Crawford's selection, Mr. Adams, Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Clay and General Jackson all came out strongly against the caucus. Their names were proposed by State Legislatures and local meetings, and much political capital was made of their attitude. Mr. Crawford was also further handicapped by the sudden paralysis which struck him down in the spring of 1823, and which for more than a year kept him from his duties—so that Mr. Monroe and the Cabinet discussed the propriety of removing him from his Department—an invalid shut away in a dark room, in danger of losing his



JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

From an engraving by Longacre

sight and his speech, revealing only to a few friends the gravity of his condition, while Treasury documents were being signed in facsimile.

Still, on February 6, 1824, the call for a Congressional caucus was issued, signed by eleven members of Congress, and challenged immediately by twenty-four others, from fifteen States. And when the caucus met, only sixty-six members were present, from sixteen States, four of which together contributed nearly fifty representatives. It was entirely a Crawford affair, and Mr. Crawford and Mr. Gallatin were recommended to the voters, and advertised, though without much effect, as the "regular ticket."

And as for Mr. Gallatin, there was so much objection to him as a foreigner born that he withdrew his name, and the "regulars" were left without a vice-presidential candidate. Already in January they had attempted to persuade Mr. Adams himself to take the place. "A nomination for the vice-presidency," he had said, "in cooperation with one for Mr. Crawford as President, could have no charms for me. Not that I despised the vice-presidency, or wished peevishly to reject the second place because I could not obtain the first; but because the people disapproved of this mode of nomination, and I disapproved of it myself."

And Mr. Calhoun was also full of ideas. "Calhoun," so Colonel Johnson told Mr. Adams, "pro-

posed . . . an arrangement by which I [Adams] should be supported as President, General Jackson as Vice-President, Clay to be Secretary of State, and he himself Secretary of the Treasury; not as a bargain or coalition, but by the common understanding of our mutual friends." Mr. Adams "made no remark upon this, but it discloses the forlorn hope of Calhoun, which is to secure a step of advancement to himself, and the total exclusion of Crawford."

For Mr. Calhoun was now out of it for the first place; he had very little hope in the South against Mr. Crawford; he was making a bed to lie in; and a few more weeks found him content with the vice-presidential nomination by the Pennsylvania State Convention, on General Jackson's ticket.

"The mist," Mr. Adams wrote, "into which Calhoun's bubble broke settles upon Jackson, who is now taking the fragments of Clinton's party. Those of Clay," Mr. Adams thought, "will also fall chiefly to him and his sect, and Crawford's are now working for mine. They both consider my prospects as desperate and are scrambling for my spoils. I can do no more than satisfy them that I have no purchasable interest. My friends will go over to whomsoever they may prefer—some to one and some to another."

Actually Mr. Adams was gaining ground, even though an attempt to secure a Supreme Court justiceship for the important Mr. Van Buren of New

York had failed, leaving the latter in Mr. Crawford's camp. Rufus King had declared himself for Mr. Adams; New England, however reluctantly, was rallying to his name; Mr. Clay was opposed to the "military chieftain" from Tennessee, and considered "the elevation of the Hero as the greatest calamity which could befall the country." At all events, as the election year began, there were only four candidates surviving, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Adams, Mr. Clay and General Jackson; it seemed inevitable that the choice must devolve upon the House of Representatives—and to the House only three names could be sent.

3

It was an anxious time, with all of the candidates busy in Washington with their official duties—General Jackson was now again in the Senate—and nowhere, perhaps, was there more confusion than in New York. For in that State a "people's party" of opposition to the caucus, and consequently to the "Albany Regency" controlled in Mr. Crawford's behalf by Mr. Van Buren, was so successful in local elections that many members of the Legislature deserted Mr. Crawford when the time came to select presidential Electors.

A combination ticket of Adams and Clay men was finally chosen, with the positive understanding by the

Clay adherents that the Adams supporters would guarantee five Electoral votes for Mr. Clay, in order to assure the presentation of his name to the House as one of the three leading contestants. And the Electoral votes were divided twenty-five for Mr. Adams, seven for Mr. Clay and four for Mr. Crawford; but in the Electoral College Mr. Adams had twenty-six votes, Mr. Crawford five, Mr. Clay four and General Jackson one. Three Clay votes had somehow been scattered.

And in Washington Mr. Crawford's conduct was being officially investigated—and approved—as a result of charges alleging malfeasance in office brought against him by Ninian Edwards, Minister to Mexico, in reply to charges made against himself by Mr. Crawford. And public opinion sympathized with Mr. Crawford, and Mr. Webster was extremely hostile to Mr. Edwards; but Mr. Adams thought that Mr. Edwards "has proved almost every fact that he had alleged, yet Crawford's defense takes off all the edge of evil intentions . . . and the movements of Webster against [Edwards] are of the most fatal import"; and in the Cabinet "Calhoun, Southard and Wirt all expressed the opinion that Edwards was a deeply injured man, and Calhoun repeatedly said that all his charges against Mr. Crawford were made good."

The tempest seethed, and the newspapers roared,

so that the Administration was obliged to make use of the *National Journal* in place of the *National Intelligencer.* And whether or not Mr. Edwards had thought to damage Mr. Crawford's candidacy, he was not to succeed.

The campaign went on, and if Mr. Adams ever laughed he must have done so at the recollection of his earlier appraisals of General Jackson. For at first he had seen in him only a vice-presidential possibility.

"I wished my friends to vote for Jackson as Vice-President," Mr. Adams had recorded in March, "because I thought the place suited to him and him suited to the place." And in May, "I said the vice-presidency was a station in which the General could hang no one, and in which he would need to quarrel with no one. His name and character would serve to restore the forgotten dignity of the place, and it would afford an easy and dignified retirement to his old age."

In fact, "there was no person who could be substituted for Jackson to fill the vice-presidency; no man who had so solid a mass of popularity to secure the support of the Administration. He would be satisfied, and so would substantially his friends, to be Vice-President; and, as my supporters must oppose him for the presidency, the only way that they could manifest their regard for him and their respect for his services was to vote for him as Vice-President."

It was all very friendly and thoughtful; and in January, on the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, Mrs. Adams had given a grand ball for a thousand guests in honor of the old Hero.

> "Wend you with the world tonight?
> Brown and fair, and wise and witty,
> Eyes that float in seas of light,
> Laughing mouths and dimples pretty,
> Belles and matrons, maids and madams,
> All are gone to Mrs. Adams' . . ."

And in March the General gave a party. Mr. Adams, Mr. Clay and Mr. Calhoun were there, and "at the dinner," Mr. Adams noted, "he [Clay] became warm, vehement and absurd upon the tariff, and persisted in discussing it. . . . He is so ardent, dogmatical and overbearing that it is extremely difficult to preserve the temper of friendly society with him." But there were those, too, who did not always consider Mr. Adams's company an indispensable delight.

The nation voted at last, with many combinations and fusions, with six Legislatures appointing Electors, and with considerable apathy in several important States. And no one had a majority; Mr. Clay was fourth on the list by four Electoral votes; General Jackson led in both the recorded popular vote and in the Electoral; and Mr. Calhoun was easily Vice-President. And incomplete as the recorded

popular vote may be, General Jackson had only some one hundred and fifty-three thousand popular votes out of the three hundred and sixty-one thousand cast, only ninety-nine Electoral ballots out of two hundred and sixty-one; in the Electoral count he carried eleven States out of twenty-four. It was on such flimsy foundations that he was to base his subsequent claim as the representative of "the will of the people."

The only fair way, perhaps, would have been to send the General and his closest competitor, Mr. Adams, back to the people; instead, the General, Mr. Adams and Mr. Crawford had to be sent to the representatives of the people in the House.

4

"My position," Mr. Clay was soon writing with his tongue in his cheek, "in relation to the friends of the . . . candidates is singular enough and often to me very amusing. . . . They all believe that my friends have the power of deciding the question, and then that I have the power of controlling my friends. . . . I am sometimes touched gently on the shoulder by a friend, for example, of General Jackson, who will thus address me, 'My dear Sir, all my dependence is upon you, don't disappoint us. . . .' Immediately after, a friend of Mr. Crawford will accost me, 'The hopes of the Republican party are concentrated on you, for God's sake preserve it. . . .' Next a friend of Mr. Adams comes with tears in his eyes. 'Sir, Mr. Adams has always had the greatest respect for you

and admiration of your talents. There is no station to which you are not equal. . . .' How can one withstand all this disinterested homage and kindness?"

Later on, in a more virtuous mood which one need not, perhaps, take too solemnly, "my position . . . is highly critical and such as to leave me no path on which I can move without censure . . . I have interrogated my conscience as to what I ought to do, and that faithful guide tells me that I ought to vote for Mr. Adams. I shall fulfill its injunction." And as for the importunings of the candidates, Mr. Clay was to tell his constituents that "none made more or warmer manifestations of these sentiments of esteem and admiration than some friends of General Jackson. None were so reserved as those of Mr. Adams."

Actually, Mr. Clay had already made up his mind early in December, even in November, to vote for Mr. Adams in the House. He had so informed Mr. Benton "in the fore part of December," as Mr. Benton was to admit in 1827—a little tardily, in view of certain intervening incidents; in many conversations prior to his departure for Washington, in November, Mr. Clay had signified the same intention, or at all events a determination to withhold his vote from General Jackson; early in January, 1825, his intimates knew that Mr. Clay would support Mr. Adams. These circumstances are worth remembering, since they antedate events upon which were to be based

various charges of "corruption" aimed at Mr. Clay by the Jacksonians.

The state of Mr. Crawford's health seemed, in Mr. Clay's opinion, to exclude him from consideration; the chances were that his selection would only result in the achievement of the presidency by Mr. Calhoun —"which God in His infinite mercy avert!" Mr. Randolph was to keep telling him in the Senate; for General Jackson as a presidential candidate Mr. Clay had only the most deep-rooted and frequently expressed aversion. The politically inexperienced old frontier warrior, with his tempers, his prides and his prejudices—his contempt for civil law, as exemplified by his arbitrary arrests at New Orleans, and his lack of tact and diplomacy, as manifested by his dictatorial antics at Pensacola—this tempestuous, fire eating old gamecock, with only his military career to recommend him, was not exactly the man for the presidency.

"As a friend to liberty and to the permanence of our institutions," Mr. Clay wrote to Francis Brooke, "I cannot consent . . . by contributing to the election of a military chieftain, to give the strongest guaranty that the Republic will march in the fatal road which has conducted every other republic to ruin." And General Lafayette, who had been visiting America in 1824, remembered "that in the latter part of December . . . I . . . allowed myself to

put a simple, unqualified question respecting . . . your [Clay's] intended vote. Your answer was that, in your opinion, the actual state of health of Mr. Crawford had limited the contest to a choice between Mr. Adams and General Jackson; that a claim founded on military achievements did not meet your preference; and that you had concluded to vote for Mr. Adams."

From another standpoint—since, while interrogating his conscience, Mr. Clay must also, occasionally, have interrogated his personal interests—there was no political future for Mr. Clay in an alliance with General Jackson. The presidency was not likely to be given to two westerners in succession, and in any case Mr. Calhoun had already put his own eggs in the General's basket; under an Adams Administration there was a better hope of advancement for Mr. Clay, a possibility of the presidency in 1828 or in 1832; and if Mr. Adams was not precisely Mr. Clay's presidential ideal, still, as between him and General Jackson—in statesmanship, intelligence and personal fitness—there could be no comparison.

Indeed, whatever the external influences brought to bear, it would have been an extraordinary thing if Mr. Clay had not decided to support Mr. Adams.

5

The comedy went on in Washington, all through December and January—the House had decreed

February 9 as the fateful day—and how much harm was done to the reputation of the candidates by the unauthorized activities of their friends, it is impossible to estimate. Unauthorized or authorized—it is not always possible to discriminate.

Mr. Clay reported that—

"he had been much urged and solicited . . . and had not been five minutes landed at his lodgings before he had been applied to by a friend of Mr. Crawford's in a manner so gross that it had disgusted him," and that some of Mr. Adams's friends also, "disclaiming . . . to have any authority from [Adams], had repeatedly applied to him, directly or indirectly, urging considerations personal to himself as motives to his cause." Overtures "had been made to him from Jackson's and still more from Crawford's friends . . . Elliot of Georgia had told him that he should have the Department of State, or anything that he would accept, if Mr. Crawford should be elected; and Mr. Thomas of Illinois offered him even a promise that Crawford would, in that event, serve only four years."

And one day Mr. Buchanan—a Jackson supporter from Pennsylvania who was shown later to have been in personal touch with General Jackson—came to see Mr. Clay, and told him that the General was certain of election, that his Cabinet would be the finest ever assembled, and, "looking at Mr. Clay," that the Hero "would not go out of this room for a Secretary

of State." Mr. Clay had only to nod, in any direction, and the Department fell into his lap.

And for all his rectitude and unbending propriety Mr. Adams was not twiddling his thumbs. For Mr. Webster's ear he announced that he would "exclude no person for political opinions"—he had the Federalists in mind—"or for personal opposition to me." The important Mr. Scott of Missouri—a friend of the important Mr. Cook of Illinois—"who had some grievances against me [Adams] about the appointments for printing the laws," came to see Mr. Adams and "appeared to be satisfied with the assurances that I gave him." He then said "that he had made up his mind to vote with the other western delegations"—presumably for Mr. Adams, because Mr. Cook "was now satisfied that Ohio and Kentucky would vote for me—probably Missouri and perhaps Louisiana. He [Cook] should, therefore, be at liberty to vote according to his own inclinations," although Illinois had declared for General Jackson.

And Mr. Scott "spoke of himself as being entirely devoted to Mr. Clay, and of his hope that he would be a member of the next Administration." Mr. Adams "told him that he would not expect me to enter upon details with regard to the formation of an Administration, but that if I should be elected by the suffrages of the West, I should naturally look to the West for much of the support that I should need.

He parted from me apparently satisfied." And well he might.

But he was back the next day—

"to say that he had been under some apprehension . . . that I might consider him as having been disposed to prescribe conditions or make bargains. I told him I had not so understood him . . . He said he had not meant to speak positively. He had not then, and had not now, entirely made up his mind how he should vote."

A characteristic apprehension, it seemed to Mr. Adams, and "Scott means to vote with the strongest side."

As for Mr. Cook, he came to dinner and informed Mr. Adams—

"of the labors of Ingham, Johnson and McDuffie to prevail upon him to vote for General Jackson. Exhortations, promises, threats—nothing has been spared. Ingham promised him the Government of Arkansas. R. M. Johnson bewailed the ruin which Cook was about to bring upon himself by voting for me. McDuffie threatened him with a formal, determined and organized opposition to the Administration if I should be chosen. All the sources of hope and fear in his bosom were searched, and they will eventually prevail."

There were many such warnings of opposition. Mr. McDuffie had told Mr. Cook that—

"General Jackson's election would depend upon his [Cook's] vote; that there was a moral obligation to vote for Jackson who had the greatest number of Electoral votes; that if [Adams] should be elected it would only be by Clay's corrupt coalition with [Adams] and that the people would be so disgusted with this that there would be a systematic and determined opposition from the beginning, so that the Administration could not get along."

Threats of violence, Mr. Adams recorded—

"have been largely thrown out by the partisans of General Jackson, particularly those of the Calhoun interest. Richard M. Johnson told me . . . that it had been seriously proposed to him, in the event of the failure of Jackson's election, to erect his standard; and I received this morning an anonymous letter from Philadelphia threatening organized opposition and civil war if Jackson is not chosen."

And in the midst of it all—after Mr. Clay had seen Mr. Benton—Mr. Adams received a visit from Mr. Letcher of Kentucky, "an intimate friend of Mr. Clay's," who "wished to know what my sentiments towards Clay were." Mr. Adams assured him that he "harbored no hostility," and Mr. Letcher was certain that Mr. Clay felt none.

"The drift of all Letcher's discourse was . . . that Clay would willingly support me if he could thereby serve himself, and the substance of his *meaning* was

that if Clay's friends could *know* that he would have a prominent share in the Administration, that might induce them to vote for me, even in the face of instructions. But Letcher did not profess to have any authority from Clay for what he said, and he made no definite propositions."

Mr. Letcher came again, and Mr. Adams—

"told him candidly . . . that I had no expectation of receiving the vote of . . . Kentucky. He seemed anxious to convince me that I *might* receive it . . . I consider Letcher as moving for Mr. Clay; and this anxiety of a friend of Mr. Clay's that I should obtain the election at the first ballot in the House is among the whimsical results of political combination at this time. *Incedo super ignes*"—

I walk over fires, or at all events over very thin ice, but Mr. Letcher was insistent. The vote of Kentucky was "fixed and unalterable" in Mr. Adams's favor—that was already decided—and Mr. Adams must see Mr. Clay. And at the New Year's banquet for General Lafayette, Mr. Clay told Mr. Adams "that he should be glad to have with me soon some confidential conversation upon public affairs." Mr. Adams would be "happy to have it."

Mr. Clay came on January 9, and spent the evening with Mr. Adams—

"in a long conversation explanatory of the past and prospective of the future. . . . He had thought it best to reserve for some time his determination to himself. . . . The time had now come at which he might be explicit in his communication with me. . . . He wished me, as far as I might think proper, to satisfy him with regard to some principles of great public importance, but without any personal considerations for himself. . . . He had no hesitation in saying that his preference would be for me."

They sat there all evening in decorous discourse, content to leave certain silences unbroken. The Kentuckian laid his cards on the table, making known those matters which he had previously decided; it is not likely that the New Englander, for his part, made any mention of the Department of State. These were two cultivated politicians.

"My dear Sir," Mr. Clay was to write to Francis Brooke on February 4, "I want no office. . . . If Mr. Adams is elected, I know not who will be his Cabinet; I know not whether I shall be offered a place in it or not. . . . Most certainly, if an office should be offered to me under the new Administration, and I should be induced to think that I ought to accept it, I shall not be deterred from accepting it, either by the denunciations of open or secret enemies, or the hypocrisy of pretended friends."

6

For now there were denunciations.

"I gave you the rumors," General Jackson wrote to Mr. Lewis on January 24, "that were in circulation of intrigue, union and corruption about the P–l election. I am told it has this morning developed itself and that Mr. Clay has come out in the open support of Mr. Adams. This, for one, I am pleased with. It shows the want of principle in all concerned, and how easy certain men can abandon principle, unite with political enemies for self agrandisement. . . . It will give the people a full view of our political weathercocks here, and how little confidence ought to be reposed in the professions of some great political characters—one thing I know, intrigue cannot deprive me of—that is, the high ground the people have placed me on and the pleasure with which I can return to my Hermitage, carrying with me my independence and my political principles pure and uncontaminated by bargain and sale or combinations of any kind."

The General's grapes were turning sour.

"You will see," he wrote again on January 29, "the stand Mr. Clay has taken for Mr. Adams. This was such an unexpected course"—the General was simply talking through his cocked hat—"that self agrandisement and corruption by many are attached to his motives—be what it may, nothing can save him from the condemnation of all highminded and honorable

men. . . . He is greatly fallen, never to rise again in the estimation of the American nation. Intrigue, corruption and sale of public office is the rumor of the day."

Significant letters, revealing the Jacksonian mentality, to be contrasted, possibly, with Mr. Crawford's later communication to Mr. Clay in which he told him that "I hope you know me too well to suppose that I have countenanced the charge of corruption which has been reiterated"—in 1827, by General Jackson—"against you. The truth is, I approved of your vote for Mr. Adams . . . and should have voted as you did, between Jackson and Adams."

And now, on January 28, 1825, the Philadelphia *Columbian Observer,* quoting an anonymous letter, remarked that—

"for some time past, the friends of Clay have hinted that they, like the Swiss, would fight for those who would pay best. Overtures were said to have been made by the friends of Adams to the friends of Clay, offering him the appointment of Secretary of State for his aid to elect Adams. And the friends of Clay gave this information to the friends of Jackson, and hinted that, if the friends of Jackson would offer the same price, they would close with them."

The letter was said to have been written by a member of Congress, and Mr. Clay promptly pronounced

him "whoever he may be, a base and infamous calumniator, a dastard and a liar." He came forward then, in the person of George Kremer; a simple minded countryman from Pennsylvania, celebrated, it seems, for his leopard skin overcoat, whom Mr. Adams dismissed with the observation that he was "said to be an intemperate man, and to have acknowledged that he scarcely knew whether he had written the letter or not." That he was the dupe of the Jackson managers there appeared to be little doubt, and when the investigating committee, asked for immediately by Mr. Clay, invited his testimony, Mr. Kremer refused to present himself. Mr. Kremer was discredited, but the Jacksonians had their bass drum which they were never to cease pounding for the next four years.

"Bargain and corruption"—General Jackson was still talking about it in 1844.

7

The House voted, and on the first ballot Mr. Adams was elected with thirteen States, against seven for General Jackson and four for Mr. Crawford. Mr. Cook and Mr. Scott had done their duty, Ohio, Kentucky and Louisiana had not failed.

And because he considered it "due to his talents and services, to the western section of the Union whence he comes and to the confidence in me mani-

fested by their delegations"—and also, perhaps, because he was a stern old Puritan who never ran away from trouble—Mr. Adams went almost at once to Mr. Monroe and told him that "I should offer the Department of State to Mr. Clay."

They warned him. One gentleman—

"said he would tell me what the Calhounites said: that if Mr. Clay should be appointed Secretary of State a determined opposition to the Administration would be organized from the outset; that the opposition would use the name of General Jackson at its head . . . I asked . . . with whom he had held these conversations. He said with Calhoun himself. . . This . . . unfolds the system of opposition as formed by Mr. Calhoun. It is to bring in General Jackson as the next President, under the auspices of Calhoun"——

only Mr. Calhoun was forgetting Martin Van Buren, and could not foresee his own subsequent breach with the General—"To this end the Administration must be rendered unpopular and odious . . . and Mr. Calhoun avows himself prepared to perform this part. I am at least forewarned."

But Mr. Adams offered the Department of State to Mr. Clay, and a fig for Mr. Kremer, and General Jackson, and all the "corruption" shouters. And while in 1850 Mr. Clay was to regret his action—because it had placed him "in a false position before

the country," and injured both himself and Mr. Adams—in 1825, although his own judgment "was rather opposed to my acceptance," he did accept because his friends "urged me strongly not to decline."

If he declined, they argued—

"it would be said that the patriotic Mr. Kremer, by an exposure of the corrupt arrangement, had prevented its consummation. . . . That conscious of my own purity of intentions, I ought not to give the weight of a feather to Mr. Kremer's affair. . . . That it would be said of me that, after having contributed to the election of a President, I thought so ill of him that I would not take the first place under him. . . . On mature consideration, those of my friends who were originally averse to my entering the office changed their opinion."

But it was not Mr. Kremer that mattered, it was General Jackson.

"I am informed," he was immediately writing, "that Mr. Clay has been offered the office of Secretary of State, and that he will accept it. So, you see, the Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver. His end will be the same. Was there ever witnessed such a barefaced corruption in any country before?" As for Mr. Adams, the General had esteemed him "as a virtuous, able and honest man; and when rumor was stamping the sudden union of his and the friends of

Mr. Clay with intrigue, barter and bargain, I did not, nay, I could not believe that Mr. Adams participated in a management deserving such epithets. . . . But when these strange rumors became facts, when the predicted stipulation was promptly fulfilled . . . the inference was irresistible."

Irresistible also to Mr. Buchanan.

"The facts are before the world that Mr. Clay and his particular friends made Mr. Adams President and Clay Secretary of State. The people will draw their own inferences from such conduct, and the circumstances connected with it. They will judge of the cause from the effects."

The Jacksonians now had two bass drums to pound.

8

Mr. Clay wrote to his constituents, and General Jackson went home, spreading the seed of his obsession over the rich soil of popular credulities sprung from an intense personal devotion, a passionate local cult. In those regions frequented by the General, his utterances became scriptural, his nod shook the world. The Hermitage quaked, and Nashville trembled. The foremost among them to achieve national, even international, prominence—"one of the greatest statesmen the world has ever known," in the reckless

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"HERE'S TO YOU HARRY CLAY"

From the cover of an old song

public words of a later compatriot—Tennesseans of his day looked at General Jackson and saw a divinity.

And now the oracle had spoken. The "sovereign will of the people, the almighty voice of this great nation," had been thwarted by a corrupt coalition. As one newspaper expressed it—"Expired at Washington on the 9th of February, of poison administered by the assassin hands of John Quincy Adams, the usurper, and Henry Clay, the virtue, liberty and independence of the United States." As for the Hero—

"no midnight taper burnt by me," he announced; "no secret conclaves were held; no cabals entered into to persuade any one to a violation of pledges given or of instructions received. By me no plans were concerted to impair the pure principles of our republican institutions, nor to prostrate that fundamental maxim which maintains the supremacy of the people's will."

Grotesque insinuations, founded on the fallacy of the General's belief that because he had received more votes than any one of his three rivals he was therefore the first choice of the nation. Insinuations which found no echo in more judicious minds.

"I required no evidence respecting the charge made by Mr. Kremer," Chief Justice Marshall assured Mr. Clay, "nor should I have required any had I been

unacquainted with you or with the transaction, because I have long since ceased to credit charges destitute of proof, and [ ] to consider them as mere aspersions. . . . There is unquestionably a party determined to oppose Mr. Adams at the next election, and this party will attack him through you. It is an old, and has been a successful, stratagem."

Daniel Webster, Lewis Cass—letters came in by the score, and John Tyler wrote for Mr. Clay's native Virginia.

"Instead of seeing in your course . . . aught morally or politically wrong," he insisted, "I am on the contrary fully impressed . . . that the United States owes you a deep debt of gratitude. . . . I do not believe that the sober and reflecting people of Virginia would have been so far dazzled by military renown as to have conferred their suffrages upon a mere soldier—one acknowledged on all hands to be of little value as a civilian. I will not withhold from you also the expression of my approval of your acceptance of [the secretaryship of State]. To have refused it would have been to have furnished your enemies with fresh ground of objection."

But in 1826 the Jacksonian bass drums were still pounding, and Mr. McDuffie was proclaiming in the House.

"in round terms that Mr. Clay made the President in opposition to the will of a decided majority of the

State he represented and of the whole Union . . . he threw the whole weight of his influence in favor of a candidate whom he had habitually professed to despise as a man and detest as a politician"

—as though Mr. Clay had ever thought any better politically of General Jackson—

"He gives the vote of his own State in opposition to his own principles . . . and then has the frontless, shameless audacity to set public opinion at defiance by instantly and openly receiving, as the reward of treachery to the people, the highest office the President can confer upon him."

And in the Senate the vitriolic, and perhaps slightly demented, John Randolph was screaming his famous remark, with reference to Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay, concerning "the coalition of Blifil and Black George . . . the combination, unheard of till then, of the puritan with the blackleg." This was going too far, even for what Mr. Adams called "the rabid foam of Randolph," and Mr. Clay sent around his second; although he admitted himself

"embarrassed [by] the opinion which is entertained by some as to the state of Mr. Randolph's mind. But I thought I ought not to be governed by that opinion which was opposed by the recent act of [Virginia] electing him to the Senate."

Mr. Randolph waived his Senatorial privilege; various abortive attempts were made to cancel the duel; Mr. Randolph informed Mr. Benton that he would not fire at Mr. Clay, and then changed his mind at the last moment because he had become convinced that Mr. Clay intended to kill him; and on April 8 the encounter took place. Mr. Randolph accidentally discharged his pistol before the word had been given, and at the first proper interchange of shots both bullets narrowly missed their mark. The seconds reloaded, and Mr. Randolph assured Mr. Benton, who was present as a spectator, that he would not again fire at his opponent. Mr. Clay's bullet passed through Mr. Randolph's coat skirt near the hip, and Mr. Randolph

"raised his pistol and discharged it in the air, and exclaimed 'I do not fire at you, Mr. Clay,' and immediately advanced and tendered his hand to Clay. Clay, in the same spirit, met him half way, and the two shook hands."

Everyone was delighted; it was "about the last high-toned duel" witnessed by Mr. Benton, and "on Monday the parties exchanged cards, and social relations were formally and courteously restored." But in 1828 Mr. Randolph was again referring to "a corrupt collusion" between Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay, and pointing out that Mr. Clay had taken that very

office under Mr. Adams "which decided his preference of Mr. Adams. Sir, are we children? Are we babies? Can't we make out apple pie without spelling and putting the letters together?"

9

"Bargain and corruption"—the cry was never silenced, and in 1827 General Jackson gave it renewed life. And Mr. Buchanan was in the limelight.

"Will you," Duff Green, a protégé of the General, had asked him in October, 1826, "explain the causes which induced you to see Genl. Jackson upon the subject of the vote of Mr. Clay and his friends a few days before it was known that they had conclusively determined to vote for Mr. Adams; also advise me of the manner in which you would prefer that subject to be brought before the people."

And Mr. Buchanan had replied that

"at this distance of time I could not, if I would, explain to you all the causes which induced me to hold the only conversation which I ever held with General Jackson on the subject of the presidential election. It will be sufficient . . . to know"—and here *was* a hitch—"that I had no authority from Mr. Clay or his friends to propose any terms to General Jackson . . . nor did I make any such proposition."

However, in March, 1827, the Fayetteville *Observer* printed a letter from a Mr. Beverley stating

that "before all his company" at the Hermitage, General Jackson had recently asserted that the friends of Mr. Clay had "made a proposition" to his own friends with regard to Mr. Clay's vote. That they would elect him, Jackson, if he would promise not to give the State Department to Mr. Adams. Mr. Clay denied this latest charge, and the General himself corroborated Mr. Beverley's remarks, maintaining that a certain Congressman had been the one to approach him.

The Congressman in question, whose name had not yet been made public, was not pleased.

"I regret the publication of Gen: Jackson's letter to Mr. Beverley," Mr. Buchanan advised Mr. Ingham, another Jacksonian. "It may do harm, but cannot do good. The conversation which I held with the General will not sustain his letter"—there was apparently a hole in one of the bass drums—"although it may furnish a sufficient reason for his misapprehension. My single purpose was to ascertain from him whether he had ever declared he would appoint Mr. Adams Secretary of State in case he were elected President . . . I wished it to come from himself that he stood uncommitted upon this subject . . . How Gen: Jackson could have ever believed I came to him as an emissary from Mr. Clay or his friends to make a corrupt bargain with him in their behalf I am at a loss to determine. He could not have received this impression until after Clay and his friends had actually

elected Adams . . . The idea that such was his impression never once flitted across my mind."

Mr. Clay, of course, denied everything again, and asked who the Congressman might be. "I neither made," he stated, "nor authorized, nor knew of any proposition whatever to either of the three candidates . . . or to the friends of either of them, for the purpose of influencing the . . . election, or for any other purpose." General Jackson gave out the name, then, of Mr. Buchanan, and wrote to him that—

"it becomes necessary for the public to be put in possession of the facts. In doing this you are aware of the position which you occupy and which I trust you will sustain when properly called on"—although he should have known that Mr. Buchanan could do no such thing. "I shall now," the General continued, "give my authority accompanied by the statement you made to Major John H. Eaton and to Mr. Kremer . . . I have no doubt when properly called on you will come forth and affirm the statement made to Major Eaton, then to Mr. Kremer and then to me, and give the names of the friends of Mr. Clay who made it to you."

Mr. Kremer!

Once again, Mr. Buchanan was not pleased.

"It will at once strike you," he told Mr. Ingham, referring to the General's communication announcing

his name, "to be a most extraordinary production so far as I am concerned . . . In a letter to me . . . the General intimates that George Kremer would confirm his statement. This letter is an imprudent and in my opinion an improper one. It is well it has fallen into the hands of a political friend."

The General was again talking through his hat, and on August 8, in the Lancaster *Journal,* Mr. Buchanan gave his explanations. He had sought a denial from General Jackson of any intention of naming Mr. Adams to the State Department, because "nothing could be better calculated both to cool the ardor of [Jackson's] friends and inspire his enemies with confidence, than the belief that he had already selected his chief competitor;" and because the friends of Mr. Clay "would never agree to vote for [Jackson] if they knew he had predetermined to prefer another to Mr. Clay;" and because "some of the friends of Mr. Adams had already been holding out the idea that in case he were elected Mr. Clay might probably be offered the situation of Secretary of State." With a denial from General Jackson, "we should then be placed upon the same footing with the Adams men, and might fight them with their own weapons."

Mr. Buchanan had seen General Jackson, on December 30, 1824, and had obtained the denial. The General insisted that he "had never said, or inti-

mated, that he would, or would not, appoint [Adams] Secretary of State; that these were secrets he would keep to himself—he would conceal them from the very hairs of his head."

And in conclusion—and dreary reading it must have made at the Hermitage—Mr. Buchanan had

"called upon General Jackson . . . solely as his friend, upon my individual responsibility, and not as the agent of Mr. Clay or any other person . . . The conception never once entered my head that [Jackson] believed me to be the agent of Mr. Clay, or of his friends, or that I had intended to propose to him terms of any kind from them."

Mr. Buchanan had completely demolished the Jacksonian case, he had put his foot straight through the drum, and to the General he wrote that "I regret beyond expression that you believed me to be an emissary from Mr. Clay . . . Had I ever entertained a suspicion that such was your belief, I should have immediately corrected your impression."

It is not difficult, perhaps, to see what had happened. Hasty and opinionated in his own judgments, responsive to a pathetic degree to the flattery of his office seeking retainers, surrounded by a crew of graceless politicians—the partisan editors and provincial Majors from whom he so frequently sought advice—the General, disgruntled by his defeat, had

readily convinced himself, or allowed himself to be convinced, that Mr. Buchanan's enquiries had been prompted by Mr. Clay, and that Mr. Clay had then betrayed him in favor of Mr. Adams. Pugnacious and sensitive, hotly resentful of intrigue when practiced to his own detriment—it made a difference, naturally, whose ox was being gored—he had become the dupe of his own imagined grievance. Unless one prefers a less ingenuous interpretation of these cloudy transactions.

But now Mr. Buchanan had put matters straight; Mr. Clay was publicly exonerated by the very personage who was to have confounded him; General Jackson could make his peace with the supposed "bargainers," and smooth down his ruffled feathers. So one would have imagined. But not at all. General Jackson ignored Mr. Buchanan; he continued vehemently to maintain his accusations; his supporters kept up their ludicrous clatterwhacking.

"Bargain and corruption"—the cry rang out more loudly than ever before.

10

It was all a part of General Jackson's presidential campaign, of course. It had begun immediately, in the first year of Mr. Adams's Administration, with the General's nomination by the Legislature of Tennessee, in October, 1825. He had resigned his seat

in the Senate; he had appeared before both Tennessee Houses advocating a Constitutional amendment leaving presidential elections in the hands of the people; he was, later, to pronounce himself in favor of a "judicious tariff."

There was his platform, and for other campaign ammunition he had his "bargain and corruption." Deriving his support very largely from office holders and seekers, from political malcontents of every discordant sort, and from the less intelligent, more slenderly educated masses of the people, he had no need of a more serious program. Endowed with an enormous personal, military popularity—qualified by every circumstance of background, temperament and intellect to represent the commonalty of the nation, to embody its jealous distrust of a more accomplished and cultivated order—he had only to launch some of the catch phrases on which proletarian majorities nourish their resentments and zeals, in order to rally to his cause the full chorus of the people's Voice. And with it the deeper tones of Mr. Calhoun's presidential ambitions, the melodious notes of Mr. Van Buren's private aspirations.

One mass meeting after another endorsed the General's candidacy; he was "the central figure in an extraordinary number of receptions and public dinners;" his journey to New Orleans for the 1828 anniversary of the battle became a politicians' jubi-

lee; the Crawford interests in the South were conciliated, and the State of New York nailed down, by Mr. Van Buren, whose only request was that he "be left alone" and that the General keep "quiet;" a voluminous newspaper and pamphlet press was subsidized; all over the country "the friends of General Jackson" set their machinery in motion and spread their "Hurrah for Jackson!" slogan; in Tennessee, in 1827, the Legislature passed resolutions confirming the corruption charges and calling for the impeachment of Mr. Adams.

Resolutions nullified in 1844 by the vote of the General Assembly of Tennessee, recording that—

"so much of the proceedings adopted by the Legislature of Tennessee in 1827, as contained the allegations . . . of an improper and corrupt combination, or, as it has been more generally denominated, 'barter, bargain and intrigue,' between John Q. Adams and Henry Clay, is, in the opinion of this General Assembly, unsupported by proof and not believed to be true."

But in 1827 they served their purpose, and in December Mr. Adams was telling Mr. Clay that he

"thought it highly probable that the base and profligate combination against him and me would succeed in their main object of bringing in General Jackson at the next presidential election, and that one of their

principal means of success will be the infamous slander which he had already more than once branded with falsehood . . . The conspiracy would nevertheless in all probability succeed. When suspicion has been kindled into popular delusion, truth and reason and justice spoke as to the ears of an adder . . . General Jackson will therefore be elected."

And Mr. Adams was anticipating the disgraceful Jacksonian removals from office, the Eaton scandal, the "Kitchen Cabinet," and the war on the Bank, when he remarked that the General was

"incompetent both by his ignorance and by the fury of his passions. He will be surrounded and governed by incompetent men, whose ascendency over him will be secured by their servility and who will bring to the Government of the nation nothing but their talent for intrigue."

11

The Administration would have had a better chance, in spite of the Jacksonian uproar, if Mr. Adams had been personally more popular, more genial, more attractive. Harsh and abrupt, unversed in the arts of cajolery and ingratiation, he seldom found the fortunate word, the happy gesture. It was his genius to be fearlessly outspoken, distressingly aloof, intellectually arrogant, and rigidly correct.

He would do nothing to help himself. He would

not traffic in offices; he would not dismiss disloyal functionaries appointed by his adversaries under the previous Administration and retained by him; during the entire course of his presidency he only authorized twelve removals—and yet his enemies solemnly accused him of a corrupt manipulation of the Federal patronage. He would not organize a press favorable to himself, although his friends eventually established the *Truth's Advocate and Monthly Anti-Jackson Expositor,* in reply to the Jacksonian *United States Telegraph and Extra.* He would not speak in the pivotal State of Pennsylvania, where some of the most virulent scurrilities of the campaign were being propagated about him.

His very virtues reacted against him and seemed to enhance his faults. From the beginning he knew himself to be dedicated to defeat, and perhaps he did not greatly care.

He was, of course, the unquestioned choice for 1828 of the Administration and Clay groups—the National Republicans, as they were calling themselves—groups devoted to the policies of internal improvement and protective tariff. And with Mr. Calhoun the evident vice-presidential candidate of the Jackson men, the Adams selection fell finally to Richard Rush, the Secretary of the Treasury—after various negotiations which had even for a time envisaged Mr. Crawford for the office.

But Mr. Adams would have nothing to do with Mr. Crawford now, although he had sought originally to retain him at the Treasury. For Mr. Adams had since been made aware of a dispute between Mr. Crawford and Mr. Monroe, in which—according to Mr. Southard, who had it from Mr. Monroe—Mr. Crawford had "raised his cane, as in the attitude to strike, and said 'You damned infernal old scoundrel.' Mr. Monroe seized the tongs at the fireplace for self-defence, applied a retaliatory epithet to Crawford, and told him he would immediately ring for servants himself and turn him out of the house." Mr. Crawford had departed, saying that he had not intended to insult the President, and the two men "never met afterwards."

In Congress, the opposition to Mr. Adams, promised in advance, continued without interruption, fostered by Vice-President Calhoun and his deliberately hostile committees. Every move of the Administration was viciously attacked, under the furious leadership of John Randolph, first in the Senate and later in the House. Mr. Randolph had hated John Adams, he now turned his ferocity against the son, "the cub" who "was a greater bear than the old one." He had, Mr. Randolph stated, borne "some humble part in putting down the dynasty of John the First, and, by the Grace of God, I hope to aid in putting down the dynasty of John the Second."

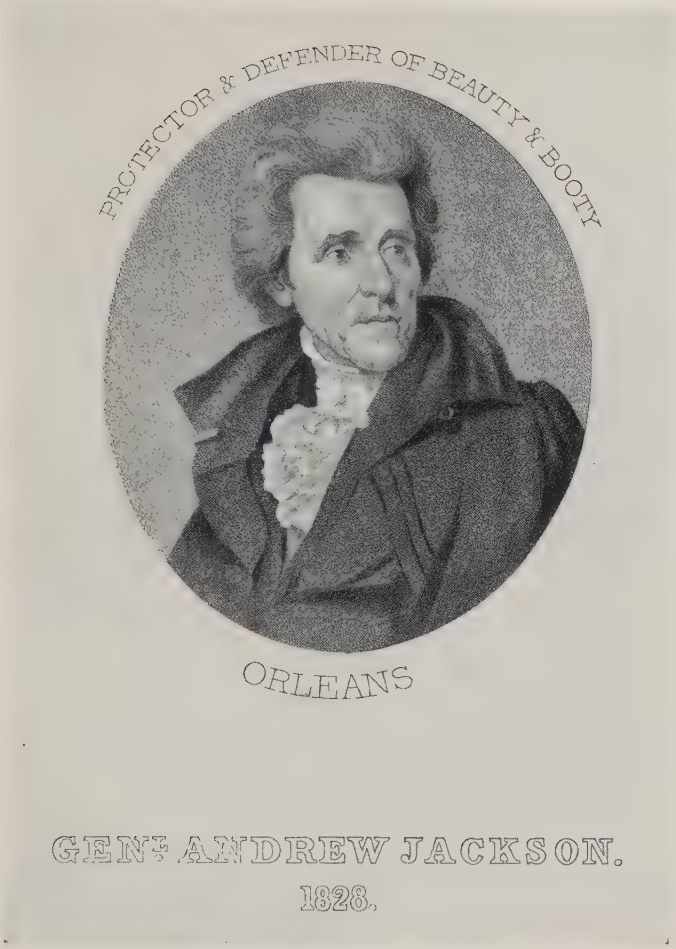
He succeeded so well that he was, in 1828, considered

"the commanding general of the opposition force . . . the man who is now at the head of the opposition to this Administration . . . the man that is entitled to more credit . . . for his efficiency [in overthrowing the Administration] than any three men in this nation . . . Certainly the ablest political recruiting sergeant that has been in this or any other country."

And Mr. Adams had his own stinging words for the flamboyant Virginian.

"The besotted violence of John Randolph," he recorded in 1827, "excluded him thenceforward from all right to personal civility from me. Half a dozen other frequenters of gin lane and beer alley . . . put themselves into the same position, and two or three slanderers drunk with faction though not with alcohol must be added to the gang."

And in the midst of it all, the Jacksonians attempted their celebrated flimflam with the tariff, the 1828 "Tariff of Abominations." For it seemed to them necessary to their political success that they give the impression before their southern supporters of opposing a protective tariff—the South was now once more against protection—while safeguarding it in the presence of industrial Pennsylvania. New England did not matter, since New England would



From an engraving by Childs

vote for Mr. Adams in any case. And so it was arranged to bring in a bill providing such high duties on iron, wool and hemp that the New Englanders would be obliged to join with the South in defeating it, thereby damaging the Adams Administration in the estimation of Pennsylvania. A bill, as a contemporary saw it,

"engendered between the avowed anti-tariff men of the South, and the professed tariff Jackson men of the middle States, and framed most pointedly so as to bear heavily and injuriously on New England, in the hope that it would thus be defeated."

A very pretty scheme, worthy of Jacksonian politics—only New England voted for the bill after all, and it was passed.

12

It was a merciless, filthy, scavenging campaign, in which nothing personal concerning the candidates was denied to the accumulating spoils of published privacies—from the temporary legal complications in General Jackson's matrimonial affairs to the billiard table, that piece of "gambling furniture," at the White House.

The General's private record was shouted through the pamphlets; his personality, his ungodliness, his profanity, his game-cocks and his horses, his duels, his brawls, his feuds, and always the technical irregu-

larity of his marriage coupled, on the one hand, with the most derisive opinions, and, on the other, with the most slanderous untruths about his wife—the matter must be referred to, since it furnished the principal staple of the domestic attacks on General Jackson, and was finally responsible, to a certain degree, for Mrs. Jackson's death, in December, 1828. His public career was torn into shreds; his alleged dealings with Aaron Burr, his military arrests and contempt of court at New Orleans, his insubordinations in the Floridas, his executive autocracy at Pensacola, his "murder" of deserting militiamen at Mobile—"Some Account of some of the Bloody Deeds of Gen: Jackson," by John Binns, posters adorned with tombstones and coffins, and known as the Binns Coffin Handbills—from every quarter, and in every variety of language, General Jackson was ridiculed, assailed and exposed.

And for Mr. Adams there was nothing but libels and falsehoods. He was a monarchist and a Federalist; he had fattened on the public treasury; he was a friend of duellists—an incongruous charge, surely, from the Jackson camp; he was corrupt and unprincipled in his distribution of patronage; he was an extravagant profligate; while Minister to Russia he had, so they did not hesitate to insist, sold an American servant girl to the Czar; he was a Mason—it was the time of popular animosity towards Masonry—and

when he officially denied that he was a Mason it made no difference, he was still a Mason; he was plotting to announce General Jackson's death just before the election, in order to prevent citizens from voting for him; and of course he had made a corrupt bargain with Henry Clay. It speaks conspicuously for the integrity of his conduct in thirty years of distinguished public service that the Jacksonians could find no thicker mud to fling at him.

The wreckage was dragged to the polls, and General Jackson was elected. He had some hundred and thirty-nine thousand more popular votes than Mr. Adams, one hundred and seventy-eight Electoral ballots from seventeen States, as against eighty-three from ten. A "movement of the people," a "revolt of democracy against aristocracy"—and yet Mr. Channing points out some curious Electoral details. General Jackson was elected by the solid South, and, according to the Federal ratio in 1828, each southern Elector represented only twenty-five thousand free persons, while his northern colleague was representing thirty-five thousand. And with the solid South General Jackson could not have secured a majority of the Electoral vote without the reinforcement of Pennsylvania and New York.

"It would seem," Mr. Channing concludes, "that Jackson was raised to the presidency by the over

representation of the South combined with the employment of most unjustifiable methods by his partisans in Pennsylvania and in New York. On the whole, possibly it was more honorable to have been defeated in 1828 than to have been elected."

And Mr. MacDonald, in his *Jacksonian Democracy,* remarks that—

"to personal vindication of Jackson was added emphatic popular endorsement of the social and political order with which he was identified. In the election of Jackson the people . . . turned their backs on their early principles of statesmanship, and entrusted the conduct of the federal government to an untrained, self-willed, passionate frontier soldier. That he was not of the old school was, in the eyes of his supporters, a commendation . . . A great democracy will never be governed for long together by its best men, but by its average. To the average voter in 1828, Jackson was a great popular leader because they held him to be also a typical democrat."

It was the end of a cultivated, discriminating era; the close of a succession, whatever their idiosyncracies and limitations, of seemly persons, of capable intellects, of meritorious achievements, such as the founders of the Republic had envisaged as destined to dignify the chief magistracy of the nation, to mature its councils and to grace its annals. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams.

The quality of that succession was not, except at rare intervals, to be attained again by the average personalities, the popular politicians, the convention compromises who were to follow.

It was indeed, with slight future interruptions, the final triumph of democracy.

The Singing Whigs

1840

THE SINGING WHIGS

1840

1

FOUR years of Jacksonian democracy had resulted, in 1832, in the formation of a National Republican wing of the Democratic party, led by Mr. Clay; men who deplored the unseemliness of the Peggy Eaton Cabinet scandal; the insufficiency of the Cabinet itself—that "millenium of the minnows," as Washington City called it—the "kitchen" table autocracy of the whimsical General, sitting in conclave with his cronies, editor Blair of the *Globe,* Duff Green of the *Telegraph,* "Martin [Van Buren], Prince of Kinderhook, Arch Chancellor . . . Amos [Kendall] Lord Scullion, the Emperor's favorite Cup Bearer . . . Lord Lewis, the Groom of the Chambers;" the tariff policies growing out of the Nullification uproar; the hostile Executive attitude towards the Bank of the United States and towards all internal improvements; and the corrupt, office seeking, power abusing, partisan tone of the entire Administration.

Four years more of Jacksonian democracy, victorious over Mr. Clay—that is to say of continued Executive autocracy, of undiminished official partisanship, of increasingly violent interference with the fiscal system of the nation, of unrelenting administrative abuse of power—had transformed all the varying degrees of opposition into the more or less definite faction calling itself, after 1834, the "Whig" party.

"Most of those," so Horace Greeley classified them, "who, under the name of National Republicans, had previously been known as supporters of Adams and Clay, and advocates of the American [protective tariff] system; most of those who, acting in defence of [the] rights of the States, had been stigmatized as Nullifiers, or the less virulent State-Rights men who were thrown into . . . armed neutrality towards the Administration by the . . . proclamation of 1832 against South Carolina; a majority of those before known as Anti-Masons; many . . . who united in condemning the high-handed conduct of the Executive . . . ; numbers who . . . were now awakened . . . by the palpable usurpations of the Executive, and the imminent peril of our whole fabric of constitutional liberty and national prosperity."

And now still another four years of Jacksonian democracy, under the presidency of "the guileless Van Buren"—for the Whigs under General Harrison had failed by some twenty-seven thousand popu-

lar votes to prevent, in 1836, the election of General Jackson's chosen successor, the little New York party manager politician from Kinderhook, who had helped to manage the General's second campaign; the champion of Mrs. Secretary of War Eaton, that "brave little Peggy" who was the object of General Jackson's deluded chivalry, "the Pompadour," as one pamphlet had it, "Her Immaculate Highness, Rosilia, Princess of Influence;" the "Little Magician" Van Buren who, according to Mr. Webster, controlled all the pages on the White House back stairs during the early Jackson régime, and had, in John Quincy Adams's estimation, been "notoriously engaged in canvassing for the presidency by paying his court to Mrs. Eaton"—another four years of Jacksonian democracy had further intensified the Whig opposition.

For they had seen a fearful panic caused by the General's "war" on the Bank, and the propounding by Mr. Van Buren of even more radical measures, such as the establishment of an Independent Treasury; so that the Whigs were pointing out that—

"Van Buren . . . was elected in 1836. Then he had the halo of Jackson's popularity. But how is it now? Has a bankrupt treasury, a wretched currency, profligate use of public money, insolent meddling of Government officers with elections . . . added to his popularity?"

And there was something else the matter with Mr. Van Buren. Just as the "republican," intensely democratic atmosphere of Mr. Jefferson's day had vanished during the quite aristocratic, however politically Democratic, Administrations of Mr. Madison, Mr. Monroe and Mr. Adams—for it was a curious thing how quickly democracy, given the opportunity, took unto itself the appurtenances and manners of a supposedly despised aristocracy—so the invasion of the White House by the muddy shoes of General Jackson's inauguration rabble, and the final return to that pristine republican simplicity which his election by a triumphant populace was supposed to have foretold, did not survive their sturdy hero's tenure of office.

For if the General was one of Nature's noblemen, Mr. Van Buren, though himself of humble origin, happened to be a gentleman of considerable culture and taste, who liked to surround himself with gentlemen, and who restored to the presidency after he had achieved it a certain poise, a certain dignity and a certain grace of social procedure which inevitably offended his more plebeian constituents. It was not his policies and his Treasury so much as the furniture in his "gilded palace," the gold spoons with which he was said to eat expensive soup from a silver tureen, and his maroon coach with outriders which were to defeat him in the approaching campaign.

Congressman Ogle, of Pennsylvania, knew all about it. The presidential canvass had already begun when, on April 14, 1840—in a speech which was only intended to be a party argument against the Appropriation Bill, but which turned out to be the one great Whig document of the campaign—Mr. Ogle put it to the Whig members of Congress to determine whether they would maintain for the President's private accommodation a "Royal Establishment," a palace "as splendid as that of the Caesars and as richly adorned as the proudest asiatic mansion," at the cost of the nation.

"Let us," Mr. Ogle suggested, "survey its spacious courts, its gorgeous banqueting halls, its sumptuous drawing rooms, its glittering and dazzling salons, with all their magnificent and sumptuous array of gold and silver, crimson and orange, blue and violet, screens of Ionic columns, marble mantels . . . gilt eagle cornices, rich cut glass and gilt chandeliers . . . French bronze gilt lamps, gilt framed mirrors of prodigious size . . . mahogany gilt mounted and rosewood pianofortes . . . mahogany gilt bronze mounted secretaries, damask, satin and double silk window curtains, Royal Wilton, and Imperial Brussels, and Saxon carpets, gilt and satin settees, sofas, bergeras, divans, tabourets and French comfortables, elegant mahogany gilt eagle mounted French bedsteads, gilt plateaus, gaudy artificial flowers, rich blue and gold bonbons, tambours, compotiers, ice

cream vases, splendid French china vases, olive boats, octagonal bowls, silver tureens, boats and baskets of every rich work, golden goblets, table spoons, knives and forks"—

Mr. Ogle had put his hands on an inventory of Mr. Monroe's imported furnishings for the White House.

"How do you relish," Mr. Ogle thundered on, "the notion of voting away the hard cash of your constituents for silk tassels, galoon, gimp and satin medallion to beautify and adorn the Blue Elliptical Saloon?"

And if Mr. Van Buren chose to spend hundreds of dollars supplying himself with Corinthian Oil of Cream, Concentrated Persian Essence, Extract of Eglantine and Double Extract of Queen Victoria, was that a reason for "charging the farmers, laborers and mechanics of the country with bills for hemming his dish rags, for his larding needles, liquor stands and foreign cut wine coolers?"

Such was the spirit in which the fantastic campaign of 1840 was conducted.

2

Except for the Democratic Anti-Masonic party, which had already nominated General William Harrison—the defeated Whig candidate of 1836—and the Abolitionists who, contrary to the wishes of the Anti-Slavery Society, were meeting as a po-

litical group to select James Birney and Thomas Earl, the Whigs were the first in the field, with their national convention at Harrisburg, on December 4, 1839.

And if Mr. Clay had excellent reason to consider himself one of the foremost members of his party—indeed, the candidate in whose favor a majority of the delegates were personally inclined—still it was the irony of his position that his nomination must be viewed officially as a danger to Whig success. The Abolitionists and Anti-Masons were opposed to him, in the South his American System protective tariff was objected to, the New York leaders, Mr. Seward and Mr. Weed, were against him, at the Pennsylvania State convention it had been said that "there are in the party of opposition many branches, Abolitionists, Anti-Masons, Democrats, Whigs . . . Can Mr. Clay unite these? He cannot." And the Whigs were determined to unite all their factions—all the anti-renters, anti-slavers and National Republicans, all the Webster Whigs, and Clay Whigs, and every other variety of Whigs—and to win the election with a candidate who would satisfy all the groups. "Union and Harmony" was the watch-word, and Mr. Clay himself had already insisted that "if my name creates any obstacle to union and harmony, away with it, and concentrate upon some individual more acceptable to all branches."

Mr. Clay did not expect to be taken seriously, perhaps—he was reported to have wept and "sworn like a trooper" after being set aside, as he was, at Harrisburg—and he had probably not anticipated any necessity for the public reading of that letter in which he had proclaimed that—

"if the deliberations of the convention shall lead them to the choice of another as the candidate . . . far from feeling any discontent, the nomination will have my best wishes and receive my cordial support."

But Mr. Clay's name did create an obstacle to union and harmony, and it was upon another individual more acceptable to all branches that the convention eventually concentrated its choice—upon General Harrison, again, the hero of Tippecanoe, a veteran of fifty years' civil and military public service.

They gave him the nomination unanimously—after a series of ballots conducted under a curious system of continual reports by delegations to committees, in which Mr. Clay seemed to have with him a plurality of the delegates but not a majority of the delegations —and for Vice-President they chose John Tyler of Virginia, whose friends indignantly denied that the post had been promised to him by Mr. Clay in return for Mr. Tyler's assistance in securing the election of William Rives to the Senate from Virginia. And if in the preliminary Whig State conventions there had

been a great deal of talk concerning "principles, not men"—there was no "man worship" among the Whigs, and it did not matter who was selected as long as Whig principles were safeguarded—still the national convention did not think it necessary to make any pronouncement regarding the issues of the day. The Bank and the tariff were subjects of too dangerous a character to warrant specific declarations. It was better not to have any platform at all, other than a general decrying of Mr. Van Buren and all his works.

The convention devoted some time, instead, to contemptuous criticism of the Democratic "Locofocos" —so named from the occasion of their famous meeting when, the Whig landlord having turned off the gas, they were obliged to write their resolutions by the light of locofoco friction matches—and to the eulogistic oratory of gentlemen busily explaining their preference for Mr. Clay and their concurrent failure to vote for him; how—

"the first choice of my constituents was Henry Clay; and my constituents are uncompromising; but it is in their hostility to Martin Van Buren . . . I stand on the broad platform of hostility to Martin Van Buren and will support the nomination."

Union and Harmony.

And on the way back to Washington from the con-

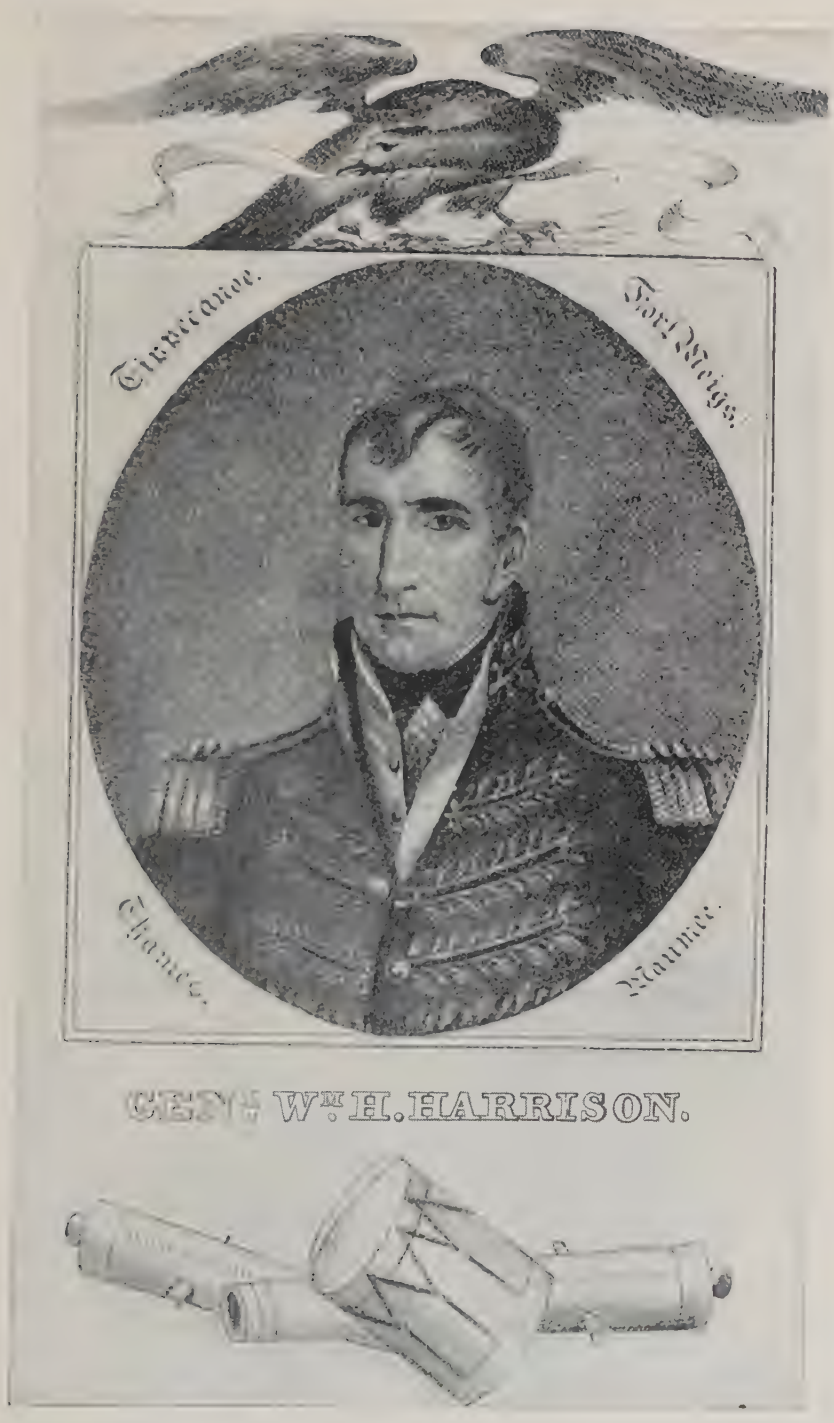
vention, while they were together on "the cars," so many of the delegates discovered themselves to be firm Clay men in their personal convictions that they called upon Mr. Clay to tell him, in some cases with tears, that he had been "offered up, not so much by his friends . . . as by himself"—Mr. Clay's letter of renunciation had finally been read to the convention—"a living sacrifice to the great principles of our political faith which forbids man worship." And at the great Whig dinner on the following evening the speakers all referred felicitously to Harry'sburg, where, if the delegates had not been able to choose Harry of the West, they had at least shown the wisdom of selecting Harry's-son. And Mr. Clay assured them with all his heart that it was not the Whig way to argue over men, and that there had been no sacrifice on his part. None whatever.

And while the Abolition press was celebrating Mr. Clay's defeat at Harrisburg—and praising God

"for a great anti-slavery victory . . . A slave holder is incapacitated for the presidency of the United States! Set up a monument of progress . . . The rejection of Henry Clay shows that a slave holder can never again expect to be President of this free Republic"—

Mr. Hammond thought that Mr. Clay had—

"great reason to be thankful that the burden of being a candidate for the presidency was not put upon you.



From an old print

In my view the canvass was always full of degradation, and I think that now-a-days its humiliation is greatly increased . . . Everyone claims to question the candidate of his life, opinions and general conduct. An indecent impudence marks the movements of his friends; the foulest and often most painful imputations characterise the assaults of opponents. A man has to give up his own self-respect, or every hour gives offense to some pedagogue that stands over him with uplifted rod."

From such a condition—

"I would ask that all high-minded men may be delivered, and I would earnestly condole with every friend made subject to it by the imperious call of the country. And, after all, what is the station when attained? Just that in which no upright, independent man can feel himself at ease, or hold his own assurance that he makes his own opinions the basis of his public acts."

As between the presidency and a place in the Senate there was no comparison.

Into such disrepute, in the opinion of at least one citizen, had the first magistracy fallen as a result of the contamination of politicians.

3

The failure of the Whigs to provide themselves with a platform—Mr. Ogle's Blue Elliptical Saloon

had not yet found its way into politics—was remedied by the Locofoco press itself. The blunder was committed by a Baltimore paper which, having had its attention drawn to a remark concerning General Harrison made by a friend of Mr. Clay, decided that it would be a good joke on the Whigs to publish the statement. Only it turned out to be a stupendous joke on the Democrats.

What Mr. Clay's friend had said, on hearing of the nomination, was that if General Harrison were given a pension of two thousand dollars a year and a barrel of hard cider he would be perfectly content to spend the rest of his days in his log cabin, studying moral philosophy.

This appraisal of the Whig candidate, sneeringly reproduced by the Democratic journals, elected him. The inevitable interpretation placed upon the Locofoco guffaws was that General Harrison, because he was a plain man, and a poor man, and a plebeian, was not fit to become President of the United States. All of the plain, poor plebeians in the country became extremely indignant forthwith. The Democrats had presumed to laugh at the General because he was man enough to toil on his farm, because he was satisfied to partake of simple fare, as symbolized by hard cider in contrast to Mr. Van Buren's imported wines, because he was willing to live in a log cabin—hallowed

home of a hardy race of pioneers—and not in a "gilded palace;" and "listen to the fawning minions of power casting sneers at the venerable hero . . . on account of his poverty."

In vain the Democrats protested that the remark had emanated, not from them, but from the most select Whig circles. In vain they pointed out that General Harrison was not a poor man—

"that he does not drink hard cider unless from choice, that his home is not a log cabin but a fine home, and that as clerk of a court he receives a clear income of six thousand dollars a year in fees"—

the Whigs had already begun to sing.

"Let Van from his coolers of silver drink wine,
And lounge on his cushioned settee,
Our man on his buckeye bench can recline,
Content with hard cider is he.
Then a shout for each freeman, a shout for each State,
To the plain, honest husbandman true,
And this be our motto, the motto of fate,
Hurrah for old Tippecanoe!"

The Log Cabin, Hard Cider campaign was under way, and once the Whigs had begun to sing they never stopped; especially after Alexander Ross, of Zanesville, Ohio, wrote his famous words to the tune of *Little Pigs.*

"What has caused the great commotion,
motion, motion,
Our country through?
It is the ball a rolling on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
And with them we'll beat little Van, Van, Van,
Van is a used up man,
And with them we'll beat little Van!"

Throughout the country, cider was suddenly become the chosen beverage, the log cabin the cherished emblem, Tippecanoe the favorite name. Children were christened with it, church bells seemed to chime it, and out in the fields farmers cried "Go it Tip! Go it Ty!" to their horses.

"The American eagle," Philip Hone remarked, "has taken his flight which is supplied by a cider barrel . . . Hurrah for Tippecanoe is heard more frequently than Hurrah for the Constitution, and, whatever may be the result of the election, the Hurrah is heard and felt in every part of the United States."

And so—

"Make way for old Tip, turn out, turn out,
Make way for old Tip, turn out!
'Tis the people's decree,
Their choice he shall be,
So Martin Van Buren turn out, turn out,
So Martin Van Buren turn out!"

4

For there had been no question of opposition to the Little Magician on the part of the delegates assembling in Baltimore on May 3, 1840, for the opening on the next day of the Democratic national convention—while the brass bands of a monster Whig rally filled the air with jubilant music and its flaunting banners proclaimed—

"Farewell, dear Van,
You're not our man,
To guide the ship
We'll try old Tip."

The opposition was to Colonel Johnson, the Vice-President, and so serious had the split threatened to become that the Democratic leaders had considered the advisability of not holding any convention; but the call had been issued by the Legislature of New Hampshire, and now—with Connecticut, Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina and Illinois absent, Massachusetts only represented by one delegate and New Jersey over represented by fifty-nine—the introductory speeches were being made. Confident speeches, full of contempt for the Whig "animal show" of the previous day and for the Whig candidate, the great "General Mum," who was guarded by a committee of three gentlemen who did not allow him to make any statements of policy.

And the Democrats were ready with theirs. They were opposed to the undertaking of internal improvements and the assumption of State debts by the Federal Government; they were against any congressional interference with questions of slavery; they believed that the Constitution ought to be strictly construed, that "justice and sound policy forbid the Federal Government to foster one branch of industry to the detriment of another," and that "the moneys of the Government" should be separated from banking institutions; and they maintained that

"Congress has no power to charter a United States Bank; that we believe such an institution one of deadly hostility to the best interests of the country, dangerous to our republican institutions and the liberties of the people, and calculated to place the business of the country within the control of a concentrated money power and above the laws and the will of the people."

And for President they unanimously nominated Martin Van Buren by resolution. As for Colonel Johnson, since various gentlemen had been named in different States for the vice-presidency, the convention

"deem it expedient . . . not to choose between the individuals in nomination, but to leave the decision to their republican fellow-citizens in the several States, trusting that, before the election shall take place,

their opinions shall become so concentrated as to secure the choice of a Vice-President by the Electoral Colleges."

A proceeding which entertained the Whigs as much as it annoyed the supporters of Colonel Johnson, who was to secure forty-eight of the sixty Democratic Electoral votes cast by the States.

5

And now the Whig uproar began in the West. They convened, and paraded, and rallied. In Columbus, some twenty thousand people assembled from all over the State and marched eight abreast in a procession two miles long, carrying banners and transparencies — The Hero of Tippecanoe — The Farmer's President—Harrison, Two Dollars a Day and Roast Beef—The Prairies Are on Fire—Clear the Kitchen. Many of the marchers had come in canoes and log cabins, mounted on wheels, and drawn by three and four pairs of horses. While the cabins trundled along the roads their escorts sat on the roof and drank hard cider. In Dayton, one hundred thousand came rolling in, and then went rolling out again, looking for the next convention and singing—

"Oh know ye the farmer of Tippecanoe?
The gallant old farmer of Tippecanoe?
With an arm that is strong and a heart that is true,
The man of the people is Tippecanoe."

The contagion soon spread to the East, and rallies were held everywhere, attracting thousands of citizens who abandoned their work entirely in order to follow these perambulating Whig demonstrations. Sixty thousand paraded in Boston, sixty thousand more in Syracuse. In New York, the call went out for a—

"Great Moral Meeting in the Park this afternoon. A mighty, multitudinous, moral meeting will be held . . . of all the people in this city who are in favor of political morality in the use of the ballot box at elections"—

for it was the constant Whig complaint that the Locofoco office holders interfered with elections—

"It will probably be the greatest meeting ever held in New York. All the virtuous, moral, honest friends of General Harrison ought to attend, and join in sentiment with every party in preserving the purity of the electoral franchise sacred from the atrocious demoralisation of Wall Street. Meet—meet—meet, friends of the old honest hero of Tippecanoe, and declare that you are not implicated, nor will defend the horrible morals of the Wall Street cliques. Come forth—come forth!"

In Baltimore, delegates from every State in the Union came together at the Young Men's Whig Convention, dragging log cabins through the streets,

pushing "Harrison balls" covered with mottoes before them, which had been rolled from town to town—one of them was most ignominiously to collapse during the Philadelphia parade—and singing, naturally—

"The people are coming from plain and from mountain,
To join the brave band of the honest and free,
Which grows as the stream from the leaf sheltered fountain,
Spreads broad and more broad till it reaches the sea.
No strength can restrain it, no force can retain it,
Whate'er may resist, it breaks gallantly through,
And borne by its motion, as a ship on the ocean,
Speeds on in his glory
Old Tippecanoe!
The iron armed soldier, the true hearted soldier,
The gallant old soldier of Tippecanoe!"

It was, the Baltimore *Patriot* thought—

"a proud day for Baltimore, for Maryland, for the Union. It was a day on which the Young Whigs of all the States were to meet in grand convention. Never before was seen such an assemblage of the people, in whose persons are concentrated the sovereignty of the government. In the language of the President of the day, '*Every mountain sent its rill*—every valley its stream, and, lo! THE AVALANCHE OF THE PEOPLE IS HERE!' It is impossible to convey the slightest idea of the sublime spectacle presented by the procession as it moved through the city. All that pen could write, all that the mouth of man could speak, all that the

imagination can conceive of beauty, grandeur and sublimity, would fall short, far short, of the reality."

But the editor of the *Patriot* was not discouraged.

"The excitement, the joy, the enthusiasm which everywhere prevailed, lighting up the countenance of every man in the procession; the shouts, the applause, the cheers of those who filled the sidewalks and crowded the windows; the waving of handkerchiefs by the ladies; the responsive cries of the people; the flaunting banners; the martial music; the loud roar, at intervals, of the deep mouthed cannon—all these and more, much more, must be described, seen in the mind's eye, vibrate through the frame, fill the heart, before the reader can approach to any conception of the reality; and when all these are done, if they were possible, he has still but a faint and meagre impression of the scene that was presented."

The editor of the *Patriot* had hardly begun.

"In no country, in no time, never before in the history of man, was there a spectacle so full of natural glory. The aged veteran . . . looked on; his feeble voice went to swell the general shout that penetrated even to the blue vault of Heaven; his hand waved above his head, whilst down his furrowed cheek ran tears, the overflowing of a heart full even to bursting with joy, and happiness, and gladness, of all that goes to make up life's best pleasures . . . The father who brought his children to see the patriots of the land; the mother to look upon her son, one of the

patriot crew; the sister to behold the brother give vent to his youthful and extravagant joy—were all there . . .

"You beheld a moving mass of human beings. A thousand banners burnished by the sun, floating in the breeze, ten thousand handkerchiefs waved by the fair daughters of the city, gave seeming life and motion to the very air. A hundred thousand faces were before you—age, manhood, youth and beauty filled every place where a foothold could be got . . . and you gazed on the pageant with renewed and increasing delight . . . Nothing was wanting, nothing left to be desired—the cup of human joy was full. The free men of the land were there—the fiery son of the South, the substantial citizen of the East, the hardy pioneer of the West were all there. It was the epitome of a great nation . . ."

The account goes on, typical of countless other accounts describing countless other Whig jubilees that went tramping through the land during that summer of 1840, roaring their chorus of Tippecanoe and Tyler Too—

"Let them talk about hard cider, cider, cider,
And log cabins too,
'Twill only help to speed the ball
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
Tippecanoe and Tyler too;
And with them we'll beat little Van, Van, Van,
Van is a used up man,
And with them we'll beat little Van!"

Tremendous jubilees which filled John Quincy Adams with alarm.

"The whole country," he thought, "is in a state of agitation upon the approaching presidential election such as was never before witnessed . . . Not a week has passed . . . without a convocation of thousands of people to hear inflammatory harangues against Martin Van Buren . . . Here is a revolution in the habits and manners of the people. Where will it end? These are party movements, and must in the natural progress of things become antagonistical . . . Their manifest tendency is to civil war."

And Mr. Adams was not forgetting that the great Whig procession in Baltimore had been defiled by the murder of one of the marshals, resulting from "an attempt of the individuals of the opposite party to break it up." The poor man had been killed, but the fracas had been drowned out with—

"Hail to the ball which in grandeur advances,
Long life to the yeomen who urge it along;
The abuse of our hero his worth but enhances;
Then welcome his triumphs with shout and with song.
The Whig ball is moving!
The Whig ball is moving!"

6

The feature of all the Whig parades were the canoes and log cabins on wheels, and especially the

cabins. Tremendous affairs, some of them, with smoke issuing from a real chimney, and a coon-skin on the wall, and a barrel of cider beside the door, and always the latchstring hanging out. And along with these itinerant emblems, every town, every village had its Log Cabin headquarters for its Tippecanoe Club, in which loyal Whigs wearing wide awake hats, and Tippecanoe badges and handkerchiefs, convened to sing Tippecanoe songs and peruse Tippecanoe literature—the *Tippecanoe Text Book,* the *Harrison Eagle* and Mr. Greeley's *Log Cabin* newspaper.

And in some of the city Cabins they also convened for the purpose of imbibing Tippecanoe "cider," so that the Whig party found it necessary to remind its followers that Log Cabin Clubs must not be used as saloons, and to admonish them to—

"let cider barrels be adopted, if need be, as political insignia, but let them be empty. If the Whigs expect to retain in their ranks the true friends of temperance and morals, their log cabins must not be converted into rum holes."

The Locofocos viewed these proceedings with a deepening disgust, not entirely unmixed with dismay. The "bubble would burst," they kept predicting, but the bubble did not burst, and the Whig ball went "rolling on." The dignified Democrats, who

wore high hats and scorned parades, and who were seriously trying to conduct a political campaign, scarcely knew what to make of the Whig travelling circus. It was impossible to pin the Whigs down to any discussion of policies, since they were always too busy marching, and bellowing about log cabins, and replenishing their cider barrels.

"In what grave and important discussion are the Whig journals engaged?" the Democratic press complained. "We speak of the divorce of bank and state, and the Whigs reply with a dissertation on the merits of hard cider. We defend the policy of the Administration, and the Whigs answer Log Cabin, Big Canoes, Go it Tip, Come it Ty. We urge the re-election of Van Buren because of his honesty, sagacity, statesmanship . . . and the Whigs answer that Harrison is a poor man and lives in a log cabin."

Or that—

"What though the Hero's hard 'huge paws'
Were wont to plow and sow,
Does that disgrace our sacred cause?
Does that degrade him? NO!
Whig farmers are our nation's nerve,
Its bone, its very spine,
They'll never swerve, they did not swerve,
In days of old lang syne."

And the Democrats had so many criticisms of General Harrison which they would have liked to

LOG CABIN

N Currier Lith N Y

OR

TIPPECANOE WALTZ.

COMPOSED AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO

GEN.L Wm H. HARRISON,

BY

Wm C. RAYNER

TROY.

Published by John C. Andrews.

THE LOG CABIN WALTZ
From the cover of an old musical composition

have answered. He was merely an old time Federalist, they insisted, and—

"keep it before the people that Harrison, in the senate of Ohio, voted in favor of a law for selling white men into slavery [when they were unable to pay fines imposed on them] . . . keep it before the people that in the Territory of Indiana Harrison . . . signed such a law to which was added the penalty of thirty-nine lashes if the white slave . . . sought liberty in flight . . . [and] that while the man with money could pay his fine and go free, the man without money must forfeit liberty and atone for his misfortune in chains and a dungeon. Keep it before the people that Harrison, as Governor of Indiana . . . signed a law imposing a property qualification on voters . . .

"Keep it before the people that during the last war Harrison resigned his commission in the hottest and thickest of the fight and went home; that the Senate of the United States refused to present him with a medal and a vote of thanks; that New York refused him the freedom of the city; that he is an Abolitionist and secretly in league with them . . . and that he represents the first and, let it be hoped, the last example of an aspirant for the presidential chair standing mute before the people."

Keep it before the people, but—except for the Indiana matter, to which the Whigs replied that the selling and whipping laws had been justified by the prevailing conditions, and that other States still main-

tained statutes providing for the sale into bondage as servants of white vagrants and public offenders—it was impossible to keep anything before the people beyond the fact that—

"No ruffled shirt, no silken hose,
No airs does Tip display;
But like the 'pith of worth' he goes
In homespun 'hoddin-gray.'
Upon his board there ne'er appeared
The costly sparkling wine,
But plain hard cider such as cheered
In days of old lang syne."

It was not a presidential campaign at all, it was simply a contest between two modes of dress, two varieties of diet, two styles of architecture. All of it set to music.

7

The Whigs may have realized it finally, for in the fall General Harrison himself took the stump in the West, asserting the right of the people to petition Congress on any subject, including slavery, and pledging himself to put an end to the interference by office holders with elections.

And in October, John Quincy Adams was observing that—

"one of the most remarkable peculiarities of the present time is that the principal leaders of the po-

litical parties are travelling about the country from State to State, and holding forth, like Methodist preachers, hour after hour, to assembled multitudes under the broad canopy of Heaven. Webster and Clay . . . Silas Wright and James Buchanan are among the first and foremost in this canvassing oratory, while Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, with his heads of Departments, are harping upon another string of the political accordeon by writing controversial electioneering letters. Besides the prime leaders . . . numerous subaltern officers of the Administration are summoned to the same service, and, instead of attending to the duties of their offices, rave, recite and madden round the land."

And when it was all over Mr. Van Buren had only carried seven States, and General Harrison had one hundred and seventy-four more Electoral votes than his opponent.

"We have been sung down, lied down, drunk down!" the Democrats exclaimed. "Right joyous are we that the campaign of 1840 is closed. Its character and incidents will furnish matter for mortifying reflections for years to come . . . As a lover of freedom and good order—as an ardent advocate for the supremacy of sober thought over noisy, senseless mummery, we sincerely hope that the political buffoonery of 1840 will ever stand solitary and alone on the page of history, a damning stain on the brow of federalism, and without a parallel in all coming time. No more may the world see coons, cabins and

cider usurp the place of principles, nor doggerel verse elicit a shout while argument, principle and reason are passed by with a decisive sneer."

In the Whig view the country was "redeemed," and the victory was—

"the most important event in the political history of a great nation. The sun has set upon Martin Van Buren and risen in all its moral splendor upon William Henry Harrison . . . the election of General Harrison is a moral triumph—a brilliant victory of men — high-minded men — over corruption and power."

A great people had—

"placed their seal of condemnation upon a band of the most desperate, aspiring and unprincipled demagogues that ever graced the annals of despotism, a band of bold and reckless innovators calling themselves the democracy of the land, at whose head was Martin Van Buren, a monarchist in principle, a tyrant and a despot in practice."

Strange words to be flinging at Thomas Jefferson's party. Aside from that—

"millions of dollars will now change hands on election bets, millions of days have been taken from useful labor to listen to stump orators, and millions more to

build log cabins, erect hickory poles, and march in ridiculous, degrading, mob creating processions"—so it seemed to the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*—"millions of dollars have been wasted in soul and body destroying intemperance, in paying demagogues for preaching treason and bribing knaves to commit perjury and cast fraudulent votes. However high the hopes inspired by the election of General Harrison, they will prove to be delusive."

And the sceptical Mr. Adams was not impressed.

"Mutual gratulations at the downfall of the Jackson Van Buren Administration is the universal theme of conversation," he recorded. "One can scarcely imagine the degree of detestation in which they are both held. No one knows what is to come . . . [Harrison's] present popularity is all artificial. There is little confidence in his talents or his firmness . . . Harrison comes in upon a hurricane; God grant he may not go out upon a wreck."

But he was to go out, instead, upon a bier, and the singing Whigs were almost immediately to march once more, in silence, behind his funeral processions.

The Dark Horse

1844

THE DARK HORSE

1844

1

General Harrison, with his Vice-President, John Tyler, was inaugurated on March 4, 1841, during the course of which ceremony he made a very long speech —but not as long as it had been before Mr. Clay ran his blue pencil through it—full of allusions to Rome, to Greece and to the Swiss Republic. One month later he was dead, and the trouble began for the victorious Whigs.

For Mr. Tyler was now, accidentally, President, and Mr. Tyler was no Whig. They had, for one political reason or another, put him on the Whig ticket of 1840, but Mr. Tyler was at heart no Whig and they knew it, although they pretended afterwards that he was a turncoat. He was strongly for States' rights, he was against any United States Bank, he was against the "American System" protective tariff, he was against Federal internal improvements—he was in opposition to all the views which the Whigs,

now that they were in power, were prepared to announce and uphold.

"Tyler is a political sectarian," John Quincy Adams, himself somewhat of an authority on such matters, remarked, "of the slave driving, Virginian, Jeffersonian school, principled against all improvement, with all the interests, and passions, and vices of slavery rooted in his moral and political constitution . . . The improvement of the condition of man will form no part of his policy, and the improvement of his country will be an object of his most inveterate and inflexible opposition."

And Mr. Clay was very worried. Just as in the days of John Adams Mr. Hamilton had thought to control the Administration, so in 1841 Mr. Clay, the dictator of the Whigs, had begun immediately to impress himself on General Harrison, the party's compromise candidate. Mr. Clay had corrected the General's Inaugural Address; he had advised him concerning his Cabinet—good Clay men mostly, except for Mr. Webster, whom he could not exclude—he had gone running in and out of the President's House so frequently that General Harrison had finally requested him to stay away and put his suggestions in writing; he had talked so violently on one occasion that the Hero of Tippecanoe had reminded him that "Mr. Clay, you forget that I am the President." Now with John Tyler, Mr. Clay was not so sure.

Mr. Tyler's Address was—

"every inch of it . . . Whig," Mr. Clay was to insist in the Senate, and "entertaining this opinion . . . I came to Washington . . . with the most confident . . . hopes that the Whigs would be able to carry all their prominent measures." But in private Mr. Clay had written that "I repair to my post in the Senate with strong hopes, not, however, unmixed with fears. If the Executive will cordially co-operate in carrying out Whig measures all will be well. Otherwise, everything is at hazard."

Mr. Clay soon found out. The Whigs wanted a Bank of the United States, to replace the one destroyed by General Jackson and the Democrats; with Mr. Clay calling for "action, action!"—and trying not to listen to Mr. Calhoun's echo of "plunder, plunder!"—Congress passed the measure and sent it to Mr. Tyler. Mr. Tyler vetoed it, while Washington mobs howled under his unsympathetic windows. The Whigs were not strong enough to override the veto, but they went to work immediately to prepare another Bank bill, and sent Mr. Sergeant, among others, to ascertain the President's views so that the act might be drawn up to suit him. Mr. Tyler's pledge was obtained, so the Whigs claimed—although Mr. Webster was at the time writing to Mr. Tyler that "if any measure pass, you will be perfectly free to exercise your constitutional power

wholly uncommitted except so far as may be gathered from your public and official acts"—and when the new bill came before him Mr. Tyler again vetoed it.

Whiggery went wild. The entire Cabinet, with the exception of Mr. Webster, resigned; the Whig press had its violent say; and ten members of Congress, headed by John Quincy Adams, turned in a report stating that Mr. Tyler's pledge had been secured in advance, and that "the majority of the Committee believe that the case has occurred in the annals of our Union, contemplated by the founders of the Constitution by the grant to the House of Representatives of the power to impeach the President." It was, unofficially, their belief—and Mr. Webster apparently concurred—that Mr. Tyler had been angered into his second veto by the sight of a letter in which Representative Botts had said of him that

"he has turned, and twisted, and changed his ground so often in his conversations, that it is difficult to conjecture which of the absurdities he will rest his veto upon . . . Our Captain Tyler is making a desperate effort to set himself up with the locofocos [Democrats] but . . . he will be an object of execration with both parties."

To all of which their Captain Tyler replied later that—

"I declare, under all the solemnities that can attend such a declaration, that my assent to that bill was

John Tyler

From an engraving by Forrest

never obtained . . . Will Mr. Sergeant endorse the statement made by the [Congressional] report—will he say that I prescribed the terms of the bill? . . . What member of the House employed to prepare the bill will endorse this statement?"

And Mr. Sergeant would not—but the Whigs were through with Mr. Tyler. All political alliance with him was at an end, and from then on "those who brought the President into power can no longer, in any manner or degree, be justly held responsible or blamed for the administration of the executive branch of the government."

The Whigs would have another candidate for the presidential election of 1844—and Mr. Clay, soon after, resigned his seat in the Senate.

2

And with the Democrats—the Locofocos, the descendants of the old Jeffersonian Republicans—the campaign of 1844 had begun on the day that Mr. Van Buren lost the cider soaked, ballad deafened contest of 1840. The "Little Magician" was to run again, and his colors had been "nailed to the mast," under Senator Benton's approving eye.

But Mr. Van Buren—while undoubtedly the choice of the Democratic majority, the prophet on whom, in 1836, had fallen the mantle of General Jackson—was not to have it all his own way. Many

people in the South objected to him; he had strange ideas about the tariff; he was in other respects too much his political father's son; he was a New Yorker, and those northern States were beginning to make a nuisance of themselves. If his flag was nailed to that Democratic mast, there was room on its halliards for other colors too. Room for Lewis Cass; for that "pre-eminent and dazzling luminary," James Buchanan of Pennsylvania; for "Old Tecumseh" of red vest fame, the ex-Vice-President, Colonel Johnson of Kentucky.

And for Mr. Calhoun. If the great idol of South Carolina was ever at all to be President, now was the time. "Many of my friends think the time has arrived," Mr. Calhoun wrote in November, 1841, "when my name ought to be presented for the next presidency. It is my own impression that, if it is ever intended, now is the time." It was arranged that he should resign from the Senate, and James Hammond was to have published a résumé of Mr. Calhoun's career, for which the latter himself furnished the topics.

"It will be sufficient," he decided, "to say that [Mr. Calhoun] has remained at his post purely from a sense of duty, without any personal motives whatever . . . And now . . . he seeks the repose . . . to which he is so fairly entitled . . . It now remains for the people of the United States to determine how long he shall continue in retirement." The next

President would need "great abilities, skill, experience, firmness, patriotism and devotion to the cause. . . . It is for the people to say who it is that has them in the highest degree. I throw out this, as a sort of outline." And an excellent outline it remains, perhaps, of Mr. Calhoun.

And for a while matters progressed, especially in the South. Mr. Calhoun's friends were always "active and sanguine," although he would not consent to do any personal electioneering; it seemed to be "admitted that Mr. Van Buren is the only one that can stand in my way, and the impression is strong that he is making no headway, while I am constantly gaining." If Mr. Calhoun saw himself forced to go before a national convention—a procedure which he detested—he at least secured a date to suit him, May 27, 1844, instead of the earlier Van Burenite November.

But in 1843 things were not going so well. State conventions were instructing for Mr. Van Buren, and when New York did so Mr. Calhoun lost heart.

"I am now disentangled," he told Duff Green on February 10, 1844, "from the fraudulent game of President making, and hope never to have to do anything with it again. It is abhorrent to my feelings and tastes." The truth was, he thought, "that both of the great parties have degenerated . . . The Whigs are the old Federal party [turned] dema-

gogue . . . the Democrats are the old Republican party [turned] spoils men . . . They, or at least the V. B. wing, are the legitimate offspring of the Burr school of politics and . . . in his and their triumph the school of Burr has triumphed over that of Jefferson. I cannot think in the present state of parties of entering again on the political arena . . . I am . . . willing to end my public life [now]. In looking back, I see nothing to regret, and little to correct."

But only a few days later two Cabinet officers were killed by the explosion of a gun on U. S. S. *Princeton,* and a week or so after that Mr. Calhoun was willing to be Secretary of State; because there were some unfinished treaties which he wished to conclude, and because it was his "duty" to accept Mr. Tyler's nomination.

The Democratic party was turning towards Mr. Van Buren; the cry was more and more "for Martin Van Buren and short Dutch cabbages against the world"—in spite of South Carolina, which would not attend the national convention, and a multitude of other sectional disputes—while the Richmond *Enquirer* reminded everyone that "Henry Clay, the roaring lion, stands in our path . . . Give us any honest, staunch Republican . . . rather than fasten Henry of the West . . . around our necks."

And Henry of the West was not idle. In 1842, in 1843, he was touring the South, from Washington

to New Orleans, addressing thousands who "constantly impeded" his progress by their "vast assemblies," their "immense concourses" gathered to give him "tributes of gratitude and respect," and to gaze upon "the greatest living champion of their country's honor and interests." And in April, 1844, Mr. Clay was at Raleigh, resting from the burden of his very great popularity.

So matters stood when, in that same month, Mr. Tyler and Mr. Calhoun sent a treaty to the Senate, providing for the annexation of Texas.

3

It is not necessary, in these pages, to discuss the intricacies of the Texas question—the English commercial interest in an independent cotton growing region, the fundamental hostility of Great Britain towards slavery, Lord Aberdeen's diplomatic intrigues, Mr. Calhoun's celebrated letter to the British Government, the various parliamentary steps in Congress leading up to the final adoption in altered form of the treaty of annexation.

What it is essential to remember is that the treaty was at first rejected by the United States Senate; that in general the Whigs seemed to be opposed to it; that the northern Abolitionists saw in it only a threat of further slavery extension; that Mr. Calhoun was convinced of Great Britain's secret intention to

acquire Texas and abolish slavery in America, so that he considered the annexation of Texas "to be necessary to . . . peace and security;" and that the South, and with it the whole southern wing of the Democratic party—irrevocably committed, for economic reasons, to the maintenance and expansion of the principle of slavery—was energetically in favor of the proposed transaction which, under the terms of the Missouri Compromise, would, if consummated, furnish new slave holding territories to the Union and an increase of influence to the southern States.

Along with Oregon, and "Fifty-four forty or fight!" the cry for "immediate reannexation" of Texas—for so it was decided to consider it—arose from the entire South, and the matter was suddenly become a political issue of overwhelming importance. Across the reasonably even path which the presidential candidates were treading had been thrown—some said purposely by Mr. Calhoun—the unexpected obstacle of a decision to be made concerning the Texas policy.

Already before the treaty had been sent to the Senate the question was being put, publicly, to the political leaders. Mr. Calhoun's views were known; General Jackson, the oracle of the Democrats, had proclaimed his support of annexation; lesser personages everywhere were recording their sentiments. At Raleigh, on April 17, Mr. Clay—apparently mis-

judging the intensity of the southern desire for Texas and thinking to embarrass his opponents—seized his pen and wrote to the Washington *National Intelligencer* that it was "perfectly idle and ridiculous, if not dishonorable" to talk of resuming title to Texas; that "annexation and war with Mexico are identical;" that "Texas ought not to be received into the Union . . . in decided opposition to the wishes of a considerable and respectable portion of the Confederacy;" and that—

"I consider the annexation of Texas at the present time as a measure compromising the national character, involving us certainly in a war with Mexico, probably with other foreign powers, dangerous to the integrity of the Union, inexpedient in the present financial condition of the country, and not called for by any general expression of public opinion."

Mr. Clay's letter was published on April 27, four days before the Whig Convention, and on that same evening there appeared in the Washington *Globe* a communication regarding Texas from Mr. Van Buren.

4

It was a belated answer to a request for an expression of Mr. Van Buren's attitude, received in March from a Mr. Hammett of Mississippi—a gentleman

in Congress who assured Mr. Van Buren's close friend, Silas Wright, that his action was only intended to assist the Democratic aspirant to the presidency, since the latter's reply could not possibly be other than favorable to the projected annexation. Mr. Hammett was told that no one could prophecy what Mr. Van Buren would say, and that his request would be answered—it inevitably had to be—and Mr. Van Buren took himself apart, for a while, and possessed his soul in meditation.

He wrote, finally, to Mr. Hammett; a letter sent through Mr. Wright's hands, of which the latter, and Senator Benton, and several others heartily approved, so that they decided that it must immediately be published, that very afternoon, before Mr. Hammett had even had time to read it. And on the evening of April 27, therefore, all Washington knew that Mr. Van Buren was opposed to the annexation of Texas—because it was inexpedient, because it was unjustifiable, because it would mean a war with Mexico, because never yet had the "lust of power" driven the United States to conquest. As for the possibility of British aggression, Mr. Van Buren did not apprehend any such event, but of course if it should occur, and if the American people should then desire annexation, he, as President, would obey the public will.

And in conclusion—

"nor can I, in any extremity, be induced to cast a shade over the motives of my past life, by changes or concealments of opinions maturely formed upon a great national question, for the unworthy purpose of increasing my chances for political promotion."

Whatever Mr. Van Buren's motives—whether he, too, misjudged the extent of southern feeling, or whether he had his northern Democrats in mind, or whether his statement was simply the result of his sincere convictions—it was an extremely adroit letter, perhaps a very courageous one. At all events, it was to cost him the Democratic nomination.

The letter appeared and was read, and political Washington boiled over. Politicians of all parties were thunderstruck, the annexationist Democrats utterly dismayed. Mr. Van Buren, they kept saying, had "ruined his prospects gratis." There was a great running from house to house, a great crowding in and out of Senator Benton's front door—without any result since the latter was completely opposed to the treaty—and Mr. Calhoun's *Spectator* announced that "Texas has destroyed [Van Buren] and considering him as beside the presidential canvass, we shall hereafter say but little concerning him." And Mr. Van Buren would not recant. "Let us," he wrote, "whatever others may do"—he might already have been thinking of Mr. Clay, who was soon to

come clambering back onto the fence—"pursue steadily and undismayed the path of duty."

And in spite of his letter Mr. Van Buren was far from believing himself to be out of the running. A goodly majority of Democratic delegates had already been pledged to him, his attitude was acceptable at the North, there was scarcely time—just a month—before the convention assembled for any definite opposition to formulate itself. Still, in various southern States delegates were resigning rather than honor their Van Buren pledges, or announcing that they now considered themselves absolved from any allegiance to him; and the editor of the Richmond *Enquirer,* hitherto a strong supporter of Mr. Van Buren, had presided at a meeting called for the purpose of issuing new instructions to the delegates of Virginia.

So events had taken their turn, all at sixes and sevens in Democratic circles, as the time approached for the National Democratic Convention at Baltimore.

5

One convention had already occurred, at Buffalo in August, 1843; an insignificant little convention from twelve States, which did not, at the time, attract any particular attention—but whose nominees, James Birney and Thomas Morris, were to poll sev-

eral thousand very important votes in various States including New York, Michigan, Ohio and Massachusetts.

The convention of the abolitionist Liberty Party, which—in a series of twenty-one resolutions—proclaimed itself to be "not a new party nor a third party, but . . . the party of 1776;" demanded "the absolute and unqualified divorce of the general government from slavery;" announced that its "first decided effort must . . . be directed against slave holding as the grossest and most revolting manifestation of despotism;" and agreed to regard that clause of the Constitution which made possible the surrender of fugitive slaves "as utterly null and void, and consequently . . . forming no part of the Constitution of the United States."

Just a little group of cranks, small voices in the wilderness, desperately in earnest.

And a different group, the "Tylerites," equally in earnest—because they were mostly office holders, their opponents declared—were gathering for another convention at Baltimore. With gold badges in their button holes bearing the single star of Texas, they met in Calvert Hall, during the session of the Democratic convention—under a banner calling for "Reannexation of Texas—Postponement is Rejection"—cheering for "Tyler, Texas, America and the Vetoes" and against "Clay, the Bank, Van Buren

and England," and nominated Mr. Tyler for the presidency.

"Democrats," as they put it in a manifesto, "arouse to a sense of danger! Listen not to the siren song of those who would delude you with assurances of security. Behold the precipice on the brink of which you are standing!"

For Mr. Tyler had been doing his best to parade himself as a Democrat, while his friends bought up "locofoco" newspapers the newly appointed editors of which made a sudden showing of enthusiastic "Tylerism." Indeed, Mr. Tyler appears to have attempted the removal of Mr. Van Buren from the presidential field by the offer of a Supreme Court justiceship; an offer made to Silas Wright by Mr. Mason of Michigan, whom Mr. Wright advised to

"tell Mr. Tyler from me that if he desires to give to the whole country a broader, deeper, heartier laugh than it ever had and at his own expense, he can effect it by making that nomination."

But the cry of "Tyler and Texas" was not to resound with sufficient vitality through the land, and in August Mr. Tyler withdrew from a contest which he can scarcely be said ever really to have entered. Except for the inconspicuous Mr. Birney, the battle was to be between the Whigs and the Democrats.

6

The Whigs met first, on May 1 at Baltimore, and the city was—

"a perfect hive; it swarms . . . busy as bees everybody seems, but yet . . . they all do nothing. The streets overflow . . . each square has its throng; the hotels are so jammed with crowds that the bewildered barkeepers stand aghast . . . Virginia has disembogued delegations through her hundred rivers; the far lakes have poured in their tribute; father Hudson and the lordly Delaware have emptied the wave of their population; and . . . Susquehanna is rushing hither in ark and keel boat, scow, flat bottom, canoe, raft and everything that can float." There was "a wonderful gleam of good honest faces, as of men who felt that they had come upon a good work, a mission of public comfort, an embassy of joy to the whole land . . . Cheerfulness, hope, good-will breathes upon every countenance."

The singing Whigs, tramping by to the tune of—

"The Loco eyes, with vast surprise,
The Whigs around him starting,
He knows each Club will soundly drub
The motley crew of Martin . . .
How keen the smart that pains his heart,
To see the Whigs so merry,
And laughing girls with raven curls
Give all their smiles to Harry . . .

Oh speed the time when this fair clime,
Renowned in freedom's story,
Shall see the day when Henry Clay
Shall guide her on to glory.
Then let the shout go gaily out,
The joyous news to carry,
That little Van's a ruined man—
The prize belongs to Harry."

On the evening before the session, "Barnum's was a regular jam; entries, reading rooms, bar rooms, porches, steps were crammed with people, and the street filled with crowds listening to the singing, and echoing each chorus with their huzzas."

"He comes, he comes," perhaps—

" . . . our patriot chief,
To scatter joy and bring relief;
We'll give the man that rules for Tip
A genuine dose of Tyler grippe;
Oh yes, he's coming, gallant Harry,
He'll send Tyler o'er the ferry
On his merry homeward trip . . .

He comes, he comes, the gallant Clay,
And millions cheer him on his way;
The little fox [Van Buren] just snuffs the breeze,
And sneaks away without the cheese
Oh yes, the manly tread of Harry
Does such fear and terror carry
Renard to his burrow flees."

And on the morning of the convention, "the whole place resembles a fair; every street is alive with

people . . . chattering, laughing, singing, huzzaing . . . The upper rooms are crowded with ladies, sitting at the open windows"—the famous Baltimore belles—

"and welcoming the strangers as they pass. Others are filled with animation and fun at the mere bustle and uproar which everywhere prevails. Clay badges hang . . . at all button holes . . . Clay portraits, Clay banners, Clay ribands, Clay songs, Clay quicksteps, Clay marches, Clay carricatures meet the eye in all directions . . . Coons, perched on balls of public opinion, rolling over foxes . . . garnish the . . . emporiums which exhibit Clay hats as the tailors . . . do Ashland coats. At the corner stands a man with . . . canes, real knock-down-and-drag-outs, labelled Clay sticks . . . In boxes are live coons from Missouri, and walking about . . . are two legged Western coons in fringed rifle shirts. Oh, the rushing, the driving, the noise, the excitement!"

The business of the convention was performed at a single sitting. Mr. Clay was nominated by resolution; Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey—whose "head, his hand and his heart . . . have been given without stint to the cause of morals, education, philanthropy and religion"—was chosen to be Vice-President; and the party declared itself to be in favor of—

"a well regulated currency; a tariff for revenue . . . and discriminating with special reference to the protection of the domestic labor of the country; the distribution of the proceeds from the sales of the public lands; a single term for the presidency; a reform of executive usurpations."

A very brief, general statement of Whig policy, which contained no reference to the Bank or to the annexation of Texas—a platform "worthy," according to Mr. Garrison, "of the leading candidate"—capped by three paragraphs of eulogy for the nominees. Followed, no doubt, by further ecstatic singing.

It was all very simple, and gay, and self-confident; and the next day there was a tremendous rally of young men to ratify the nominations; and a procession of delegates two miles long, with floats, and banners, and bands, winding through streets festooned with green under balconies filled with delectable ladies. And—

"Tennessee sent her tall sons of Anak, the grenadiers of freedom. The Virginia line had a dignified, self-possessed air, in which the extravagance of the joy manifested by some . . . was chastened and restrained by self-respect. They resembled a body of Nature's nobility . . . [Kentucky's] cheers had a jocund heartiness . . . Pennsylvania . . . showed how truly formidable are a quiet people when once

roused. As for the West, the fresh and gallant West, who can describe the utter recklessness of her joy? Her representatives scorned all restraint of ceremony."

And then—

"Away, away, for Harry Clay,
To the battlefield away;
The cheerful Whig
Don't care a fig
What Locos block the way;
With gallant soul
He'll sweep the whole,
Like summer chaff away."

7

The Democrats were not so cheerful as they, in turn, assembled at Baltimore, in the Odd Fellows' Hall, on May 27; three hundred and twenty-five delegates carrying two hundred and sixty-six actual votes, and South Carolina sulking in its tents and not officially represented. Not so cheerful, and not so noisy—as became gentlemen who had not forgotten the undignified Whig racket of log cabins, and cider barrels, and marching ballads of 1840, and who were to head their platform with the resolution that—

"the American Democracy place their trust, not in factious symbols, not in displays and appeals insulting to the judgment and subversive of the intellect

of the people, but in a clear reliance upon the intelligence, patriotism and the discriminating justice of the American people."

A long platform, opposed to internal improvement and to the assumption of State debts; to the protective tariff, to the distribution of proceeds from the public lands, to Federal interference with "the domestic institutions of the several States" and to the United States Bank, an "institution . . . of deadly hostility to the best interests of the country;" opposed, too, to "all efforts of the Abolitionists or others, made to induce Congress to interfere with questions of slavery," efforts which were only "calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences," and to "endanger the stability and permanency of the Union;" and "decidedly opposed" to depriving the President of his veto power "which has thrice saved the American people from the corrupt and tyrannical domination of the Bank of the United States."

A platform, on the other hand, favoring governmental economy and a strict interpretation of the Constitution, and resolving that—

"our title to the whole of the territory of Oregon is clear and unquestionable; that no portion of the same ought to be ceded to England or any other power; and that the reoccupation of Oregon and the re-

annexation of Texas at the earliest practicable period are great American measures."

It was a strong, unequivocal platform that they were preparing, but the problem was to find someone who could stand on it. Everywhere there was suspicion and anxiety, hostility and intrigue. Mr. Calhoun would not allow his name to be brought before the convention; Mr. Van Buren and his people "implacably detested the thought of Cass as a candidate;" it was not known how many southern delegates were planning to desert their Van Buren pledges because of his Texas letter; Gideon Pillow, a delegate from Tennessee, was amazed at the "extent of the distractions and the bitterness of feeling."

It was all a conspiracy against Mr. Van Buren, the Washington *Globe* was convinced, set on foot by means of the Texas affair by Mr. Calhoun—"the last card of [Van Buren's] desperate competitor, who has been playing for twenty-five years for the presidency with the frenzy of a gamester." Mr. Pillow was to be aware of it, this "Conspiricy," during the convention; and several years later, in discussing the existence of a secret committee which had worked, ostensibly for Mr. Calhoun, but in reality for Mr. Cass, Mr. Buchanan, Colonel Johnson or Mr. Tyler—whichever of them could beat Mr. Van Buren—Senator Benton was writing that—

"the Texas treaty which consummated this intrigue was nothing but the final act in a long conspiracy, in which the sacrifice of Mr. Van Buren had been previously agreed upon; and the nomination of Mr. Wright for Vice-President proves it; for his opinions and those of Mr. Van Buren on the Texas question were identical, and if fatal to one should have been fatal to the other."

Mr. Wright was to refuse his nomination, out of regard for his friendship for Mr. Van Buren, so that the convention had finally to select George Dallas of Pennsylvania for the vice-presidency, and in the meantime Mr. Van Buren's fate had been settled. During the second morning, when the proposed rule requiring a two-thirds' majority for a nomination—a rule without precedent in State, county or district conventions—was finally passed by exactly thirty votes. It was almost entirely a sectional vote, the northerners opposed, the southerners in favor, and that it was intended to defeat Mr. Van Buren was perfectly well understood. He had probably a majority of the delegates with him, but not two-thirds of them.

Still, he had not withdrawn, and the balloting went on all day, seven fruitless ballots with Mr. Van Buren at first in the lead, but losing steadily to Mr. Cass; while the delegates, according to the excited Mr. Pillow, "for 2 hours past had the most extraordinary

James K. Polk

From an engraving by Hall

excitment in Convention. The whole Convention had well-nigh got into a general pel-mell fight," and "the excitment is still wholly ungovernable by the Chair." They adjourned to the busy lobbying of a convention night, and the next morning, on the eighth ballot, a few votes were for the first time cast for James K. Polk of Tennessee.

It was nothing to worry about; Mr. Polk was a prominent candidate for the vice-presidency, he had come out strongly in favor of the annexation of Texas, a few States were simply giving him a canter. But during the ninth roll call New York and Virginia asked permission to retire. When they returned, Mr. Butler of New York formally withdrew Mr. Van Buren's name—quoting a letter from the latter investing him with the necessary authority in the interests of harmony—and gave his State vote to Mr. Polk. Virginia did the same. And then "such shouts, and screams, and noise!" State after State voted for Mr. Polk, those that had already voted for other candidates changed their ballots—in the midst of a furious uproar the first convention stampede in American political history got under way, and when it was all over Mr. Polk had all two hundred and sixty-six votes, and found himself the first "dark horse" nominee for the presidency.

"Never was there such *unanimity,*" Mr. Pillow wrote to Mr. Polk, "never was there such *enthusiasm*

before seen or witnessed in *any body.* I held you up before the Convention as the *'Olive Branch of peace,'* and all parties ran to you as to an *ark of safety* . . . Silas Wright"—Mr. Pillow still supposed—"will be your Vice with almost as much unanimity as you were. What a *ticket.* How *pure,* and *elevated,* and Herculian in intellects . . . It is *glorious.* We will sweep every Whig strong hold in the land—we will raise the shout all over the land . . . All's well and glorious and all is *enthusiasm* and Union and Harmony . . . I never saw such enthusiasm—such *exultation*—such *shouting for joy.* One Spirit—one *Soul* animates the great party, leaders and all."

Mr. Pillow was having a conniption. As for Mr. Van Buren, the convention could only assure him of its esteem—a little shamefacedly perhaps, now that it was done—and "tender to him, in honorable retirement, the assurance of the deeply seated confidence, affection and respect of the American Democracy." A resolution which should, under the circumstances, have profoundly entertained Mr. Van Buren.

8

The news of Mr. Polk's nomination was received in Washington "with speechless amazement," although in Philadelphia "the first feeling was that of delight—not at Polk's nomination, but that any nomination was made at all." And while Mr. Calhoun was writing that—

"I regard the nomination of Mr. Polk to [be] the best that could be made under all the circumstances. It has done much by freeing the party of the dangerous control of what may be called the New York Dynasty . . . a more heartless and selfish body of politicians have rarely ever been associated together,"

at the same time someone was exclaiming to Mr. Buchanan "Polk! Great God! What a nomination! I do think the Democratic Convention ought to be damned to all eternity for this villainous business."

Who was he, anyway, this James K. Polk? Well, people could only find to answer, he had once been Speaker of the House of Representatives, and once Governor of Tennessee, and then twice in succession defeated for that office. It was not inspiring.

"This nomination," the *National Intelligencer* remarked, "may be considered as the dying gasp, the last breath of life of the Democratic party . . . Certainly . . . the Whigs could not have desired a candidate . . . on the part of the Democracy who would present less imposing claims . . . or whom the great statesman of the West would leave further behind in any comparison of abilities, of services, or of all the high qualities which are fit to illustrate and adorn the station of Chief Magistrate." And "a more ridiculous, contemptible and forlorn candidate was never put forth by any party," the New York *Herald* decided. "Mr. Polk is a sort of fourth or rather fortieth rate lawyer and small politician in Tennessee, who

by accident was once Speaker of the House . . . He was rejected even by his own State as Governor—and now he comes forward as candidate of the great democracy . . . Oh what a ridiculous finale . . . The singular result . . . will be the election of Henry Clay . . . The democracy will be scattered to the four winds of Heaven . . . and Clay will have only to walk over the course."

"The nomination," Senator Benton summed it up, "was a surprise and a marvel to the country. No voice in favor of it had been heard, no visible sign in the political horizon had announced it . . . The time will come, and people . . . will teach the Congress intriguers to attend to law making and let President making and unmaking alone in future."

But Senator Benton was mistaken. Some voices in favor of it *had* been heard, notably that of Andrew Jackson—who was very displeased with his "little magician"—and that of Silas Wright—who had told Cave Johnson that Mr. Polk "was the only man he thought the northern Democrats would support if Van Buren was set aside"—and that of Mr. Polk himself—who was full of advice for his old law partner, delegate Pillow.

George Bancroft, of the Massachusetts delegation, was later to claim the credit for the "surprise" in the convention.

"Polk owed his nomination . . . to me," he explained. "Van Buren lost the nomination by his

declaration against the annexation of Texas . . . The hatred and jealousy which Van Buren bore [Cass] made it absolutely . . . impossible for [Cass] to carry the State of New York . . . Under the circumstances, I was the one who . . . first, on the adjournment of the nominating convention for the day, resolved to secure the nomination of Polk. I went first and called our own delegation together, and they instantly and unanimously agreed with me . . . I then went and saw the New York delegation, and . . . they looked at the case with exactly the same eyes . . . I proceeded to the delegation of Tennessee and they naturally accepted the name of Polk joyfully and distributed among themselves that part of the work which I thought they could best do. We went on in this manner."

Mr. Bancroft had spent a busy night, and Mr. Polk, thinking that he was a lawyer, was to reward him with the attorney generalcy, only to find that he had been educated for the Church—"whereupon," in the delightful manner of the Democratic spoils system, "he received the appointment of Secretary of the Navy." But there were others who had spent a busy night, and many busy days and nights.

And principally Cave Johnson and Gideon Pillow, "one of the shrewdest men you ever knew." It had begun as early as May 13, when Mr. Polk was writing to Mr. Johnson that—

"Genl. J[ackson] says the candidate for the first office should be an annexation man, and from the Southwest, and he and other friends here urge that my friends should insist upon that point. I tell them, and it is true, that I have never aspired so high, and that in all probability the attempt to place me in the first position would be utterly abortive . . . I aspire to the second office and should be gratified to receive the nomination, and think it probable that my friends may be able to confer it upon me"—he was, Mr. Pillow was to tell him, "the choice of two thirds of the convention for the Vice," and both parties seemed to "look to you as the probable V-P"—but "I am," Mr. Polk concluded, "in their [his friends'] hands and they can use my name in any way they may think proper."

And later Mr. Polk was again informing Mr. Johnson that General Jackson "openly expresses (what I assure you I had never for a moment contemplated) the opinion that I would be the most available man," although "this I do not expect to be effected." Mr. Johnson knew that "I have never aspired to anything but the second office, and *that* I have desired"—as keenly, no doubt, as he was obviously now yearning for the first—but "there is no telling what may happen . . . It will require judgment and delicacy in managing the matter," and that was where the excellent Mr. Pillow was to come in. "If however it shall first be settled that V. B. is to be

withdrawn, I see no reason why my friends should not make the effort . . . If a new man is to be selected, my friends at Nashville think that my position and relations to the party give me more prominence than any other."

In his own stable, certainly, Mr. Polk was not so much of a dark horse. And the thing was not so far fetched at Baltimore.

"If it were not for the present organization of parties," Mr. Pillow was assuring Mr. Polk on May 24, "and the embarrassment which is brought upon you by the Conspiricy [against Van Buren] you have more strength with the Democracy than any man whose name has come before the country and . . . I would not still be surprised if a compromise were finally made by both parties [Cass and Van Buren] taking you up for the P[residency]. This I give as a possability." And the next day, "you have more friends here than any man in the field . . . and almost everyone of your friends say they would prefer you for the Presidency. Things may take that turn yet." But here was the point—"we of the South cannot bring that matter up . . . If it should be done by the North it will all work right . . . I want the North to bring you forward as a Compromise of all interests."

And Mr. Polk had a little plan for Mr. Johnson. It would never do for the convention to "break up in confusion or without a nomination." Let a strong

appeal be made to the delegates "as fast as they come in to take the matter into their own hands." Get one delegate from each State—

"to meet in a room . . . and consult together to see if they cannot hit upon a plan to save the party. If you will quietly, and without announcing to the public what you are at, undertake this with energy and prosecute it with vigor, the plan is feasible . . . If the preliminary meeting . . . can agree upon *the* man"—the italics are his—"then let each one see the other delegates from his own State . . . Show this to Genl. Pillow confidentially, who will be a most efficient man in carrying out such a plan."

At all events, on May 28, during the first day's balloting, "I have," Mr. Pillow advised Mr. Polk,

"within the last few minutes received a proposition from a leading delegate of Pennsylvania and of Massachusetts"—the sequence of events does not quite agree with Mr. Bancroft's recollections—"to bring your name before the convention, for President. I said to them that your name was subject to the will of the convention, that I would not at present bring it before the convention, that if it was the will of the convention the name should be brought out by the North."

And then the lobbying began.

"I was up nearly all night last night," Mr. Pillow recorded on May 29, after the stampede was over,

"in bringing about *this result.* I had many *difficulties* to *encounter.* But I FAULTERED NOT, and this day I had the proud satisfaction of witnessing the *glorious result*—glorious beyond the expectation of any of our delegation or friends . . . I entered into no combination—I used no improper or dishonorable means. It was the result and force and power of circumstances which I seized hold of and wielded, as I think with no little skill and judgment. I had good help in some true men in the North who understood the whole game and whose names you shall in due season know."

More help than he received from some of his own henchmen, for, Mr. Bancroft to the contrary—

"I got no help . . . from our home people. I communicated the plan and prospect to some of them, and they had no faith in the thing and so expressed themselves." But "I was fully convinced it would work out right—and I worked on until nearly day," and "some of our own *faithful* delegation . . . who have done all they could in their secret assassin like manner to destroy your prospects and sacrifice you, are overwhelmed with astonishment . . . Oh Governor, how much good it did me to see the boys overreached—outdone and whipped into the ranks. Every man in the convention is now your warm friend."

Whereupon Mr. Polk began writing to the convention, to Mr. Wright and to Mr. Lane, that—

"it has been well observed that the office of President . . . should neither be sought nor declined. I have never sought it;" that his nomination "was wholly unexpected by me . . . Nothing was further from my thoughts than that any state of circumstances could arise by which the nomination would fall on me;" that "I need scarcely say to you that the nomination . . . was not anticipated by me;" and that "I have certainly never sought it."

In such paltry fashion—from the Hermitage at Nashville, and with Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Pillow running around all night through the convention segar smoke on behalf of a small politician from Tennessee—was Democratic history written, and a candidate, a President to be, found to represent the American democracy.

9

"There's a name that falls on the patriot's ear
Wherever his steps may roam,
As sweet as the sound that exiles hear
When they come to their long left home;
Though the daring, and cunning, and treacherous rise
The scepter of office to sway,
Yet the golden scenes of the great and wise
Start afresh at the mention of Clay."

Songs and processions, rallies, and banners, and slogans—"Clay and Frelinghuysen," "Polk, Dallas, Texas and Democracy"—the campaign was roaring

through the land; another campaign such as the one of 1840, only this time the Democrats were making a little noise of their own, in a dignified way.

"The whole Southwest is in a *blaze of enthusiasm,*" Mr. Pillow informed Mr. Kane. "There never was a time when there was half the excitement in this part of the country that we now have . . . We will sweep everything before us. We *feel* it—we *know* it. The excitement on the Texas question is carrying and sweeping down every resistance." Both the great leading parties, John Davis advised Mr. Polk, "are highly excited. The Whigs are uncommonly so . . . They are in the field as in 1840 with all their usual foolery, of the most unmeaning character, such as live Racoons, old Racoon skins, gourds, hard cider in log cabins"—the great emblem of 1840—"together with the most ridiculous songs, and singers hired for the campaign to sing them . . . All their parade and falsehoods will be unavailing . . . They hoodwinked the unsuspecting class . . . once by their display of Racoons . . . banners, vulgar songs and false promises . . . But I am thoroughly convinced they cannot do it the second time."

Vulgar songs, and funny songs—

"Bold Johnson may now beat his sword to a hook,
And Van in the rear all his cabbages cook,
And as soon shall a President come from the moon,
As the chair of our country be filled by Calhoun!"

And sentimental songs—

"What fairy like music, so mellow and clear,
Sails on the light breezes enchanting the ear?
'Tis the voice of a nation who are clearing the way,
To bring home in triumph their own gallant Clay . . .
What fairy like music charms valley and hill?
'Tis our own lovely country stands up with a thrill,
Her sons and her daughters are chanting their lay,
And singing a welcome to brave Harry Clay."

But brave Harry Clay, the "great compromiser," was listening to a different fairy like music just then, the increasing chorus of the popular demand for the annexation of Texas. He had been mistaken at Raleigh when he had written that it was "not called for by any general expression of public opinion;" in spite of his popularity his stand against Texas was costing him valuable votes; and with his friends begging him to leave well enough alone, Mr. Clay again began to write letters.

He was not courting the Abolitionists, that was ridiculous. He was not *personally* opposed to annexation. When he had written that Texas ought not to be admitted to the Union "in decided opposition to the wishes of a considerable . . . portion of the Confederacy," he had meant a considerable portion of the States, not of the people. He would be glad to see Texas annexed if it could be achieved "without dishonor, without war, with the common

consent of the Union, on just and fair terms." He did not believe that the "subject of slavery ought to affect the question one way or the other."

It was difficult to tell just what it was that Mr. Clay now believed, and the annexationists were not impressed, and at the North certain Abolitionists were mightily annoyed. Mr. Clay, the Whigs in general, did not realize it, but Mr. Clay had killed himself politically. Mr. Birney's vote was to defeat him, especially in New York, which he lost—and which he could not afford to lose—by five thousand votes or so out of some four hundred and seventy thousand cast by the Whigs and Democrats, while the Liberty Party was polling nearly sixteen thousand.

The annexation of Texas was sweeping Mr. Polk into the presidency—while gentlemen on both sides were publishing Fifty Reasons why their nominee should be elected, and partisans were slanderously accusing the candidates of all manner of evil, and a representative in Congress was shouting that the "standard of Henry Clay should consist of his armorial bearings, which ought to be a pistol, a pack of cards, and a brandy bottle," so much for the duelling, gambling, roistering champion of the West, as the Democrats saw him.

But his armorial bearings should really have been a pen and an eraser. So they went down to defeat

together, Van Buren, Clay and Calhoun; those old colleagues and antagonists of the Jackson days, of the Peggy Eaton fracas, of the Nullification crisis, of the Bank tumult; steadfast enemies, disappointed chieftains—but one less so, for he at least had once sat for a while in the White House. Three great personages, Secretary of State each of them in his day, two of them former Vice-Presidents and one President. And one, gallant Harry, leading his third presidential campaign in twenty fruitless years.

10

But if Mr. Calhoun was out of the national running, he was nevertheless winning a great victory in his own State, a victory of prestige and influence—although perhaps not of wisdom, from a southern point of view—showing that he was still "the guiding star for South Carolina."

For in South Carolina, while elsewhere the presidential campaign was under way, Robert Rhett was electioneering on a platform of secession from the Union. He had seen enough of the anti-slavery determination in the North; he had heard John Quincy Adams talk of New England secession if Texas were annexed; he had made up his mind to it that the only way to safeguard the southern States in the "peaceable enjoyment of their rights and property" was to have them secede themselves. And when the southern

Congressmen would not act together, he had proposed that South Carolina lead the way—as she was eventually destined to—and the plan was under consideration when Mr. Calhoun "broke it up chanting praises to the Union and peace."

Mr. Rhett went home, then, taking his slogan of "Texas, with or without the Union" into communities where already public meetings were toasting Disunion as "the only remedy," while they clamored for the Texan annexation. And for a time Mr. Rhett seemed to be sweeping the State; there was no sense in waiting, he preached—in opposition to Mr. Calhoun's advice from Washington—it was Congress that mattered, not any particular President, and Congress would soon be entirely in the hands of the "free" States. There were only the two alternatives for the South, to secede and attend to its own affairs, or to submit to northern interference. In 1844, sixteen years before the final event, Mr. Rhett saw clearly the inevitable result of the northern attitude towards the institution which was so inextricably a part of the economic life of the South. It is futile to speculate upon the altered course of American history had Mr. Rhett succeeded in his enterprise at a time when southern secession might well have been peaceably accomplished, at a time when petitions demanding similar action were coming to Congress from New England and other northern sections, at a time

when the terms "secession" and "rebellion" were not necessarily associated in the public mind.

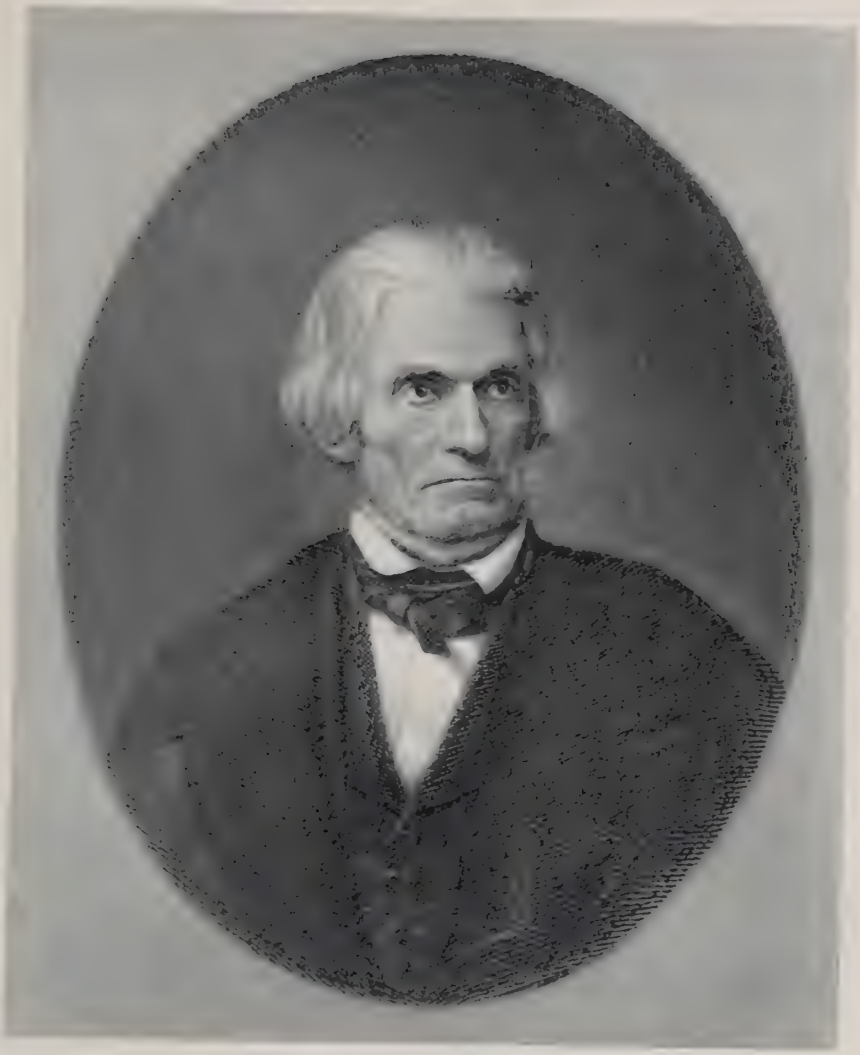
But Mr. Rhett was not to succeed—nor again in 1851—and Mr. Calhoun's advice prevailed. South Carolina must wait, perhaps because Mr. Calhoun was always afraid of English aggression and consequently dreaded a weakening of the Union; or perhaps because he preferred secession to come from a united South, formed into a federation of its own—for he, too, understood that secession must come. From the southern standpoint "things cannot go on in the direction they are taking much longer," he had written in February, 1844.

"A split between us and the northern Democracy is inevitable, unless we should prove [to] be the most base and submissive people on earth, or they should reverse their course on the tariff and slave questions, which I do not expect."

Mr. Calhoun's advice prevailed, and South Carolina voted for Mr. Polk—with the only presidential Electors chosen by a Legislature—but Mr. Rhett, and many with him, had looked deeply into the future.

11

The election was, it seems, distinguished by some magnificent frauds, of which the Plaquemines Parish



J. C. Calhoun

JOHN C. CALHOUN

From an old engraving

scandal in Louisiana was probably the most celebrated, if not the most authentic. For in that parish, by the admitted process of bringing steamersful of voters down from New Orleans, a Democratic vote was cast for Mr. Polk which outnumbered previous and subsequent polls of several years by some seven hundred votes. The affair was considerably discussed by the Whigs, and defended by the Democrats on the ground that the itinerant voters were men who had not voted in the New Orleans city election, and who were consequently qualified under the State constitution to vote elsewhere. Mr. Slidell—whom Mr. Polk was to send as envoy to Mexico—was, among others, in charge of the excursion, and the State was carried for Mr. Polk by six hundred and ninety-nine votes.

But perhaps the most distressingly significant frauds of all took place in the important States of New York and Pennsylvania, as a result, partly, of the Native American movement. The Native American Association—so early an occurrence of the "hundred per cent" state of mind is not without interest—had been formed in 1837 at Washington, and imitated in several cities, for the purpose of effecting a change in the naturalization laws and preventing citizens of foreign birth from holding office. Coupled with this political "native" antagonism towards all foreigners was a deep resentment against the Roman Catholic Church, the two sentiments combining to

create a very active hostility against "the Irish multitudes." In New York City, the movement had expressed itself, and for a time victoriously, by means of "Native" tickets opposed to the Irish element already so powerful in local politics.

In Philadelphia, in May and July, 1844, this hatred between the factions developed into a series of bloody riots, during the course of which mass meetings of Native Associations were viciously attacked by foreign hoodlums, great numbers of the Irish were in turn driven from their tenements and some Catholic schools and churches—in one of which a supply of arms had been found—were burned. The Democrats did not fail to avail themselves of this popular ferment for which they contrived to place the blame on their opponents, and they at once appealed to the foreign voters for support against the Whigs and "Church Burners." And more than that, it was incontestable that in New York, during the closing months of the campaign, thousands of Irish and other immigrants were illegally naturalized so that they might vote the Democratic ticket, while in Pennsylvania perjury in connection with citizen's papers was commonly resorted to. Mr. Polk and the "foreign rabble"—it was to be a brilliant victory for American democracy.

"New York has gone," the *Press* announced, "for Polk, Dallas, Free Trade, Slavery and War. The

President . . . has been chosen by foreigners naturalized for the occasion" while Mr. Frelinghuysen advised Mr. Clay on November 9 that "the foreign vote was tremendous. More than three thousand, it is confidently said, have been naturalized in [the] city alone since the first of October. It is an alarming fact that this foreign vote has decided the great questions of American policy and counteracted a nation's gratitude."

The Abolitionists and the foreigners—Mr. Clay's correspondence was filled with references to them.

"You . . . have been sacrificed," Philip Hone told him, "to fraud, corruption and misrepresentation, and the instruments used . . . were foreign voters made to order and mischievous sectarians . . . Foreigners who have no lot or inheritance in the matter have robbed us of our birthright . . . Ireland has reconquered the country which England lost." The Abolition vote, and "the foreign vote also, destroyed your election," Ambrose Spencer recorded, and Millard Fillmore wrote that "the Abolitionists and foreign Catholics have defeated us in [New York] . . . Our opponents, by pointing to the Native Americans . . . drove the foreign Catholics from us." The election had been carried, Adam Beatty was certain, "by the most shameful and abominable frauds . . . But this is not all. The foulest and most unprincipled means have been resorted to, and with great success, to excite the bitter hatred of our recently naturalized citizens, Roman Catholics and Abolitionists against

Whig principles, by the grossest and foulest misrepresentations."

And John Quincy Adams, who could remember other days, had his bitter say. The election of Mr. Polk had been accomplished—

"by fraud through the slave representation. The partial associations of Native Americans, Irish Catholics, abolition societies, Liberty party, the Pope of Rome, the Democracy of the sword, and the dotage of a ruffian"—Andrew Jackson—"are sealing the fate of this nation, which nothing less than the interposition of Omnipotence can save." And as for Mr. Polk, "he is sold soul and body to that grim idol, half albino, half negro, the compound of democracy and of slavery, which, by the slave representation in Congress, rules and ruins the Union."

Mr. Adams in the North, Mr. Rhett in the South —an increasing exasperation from now on of sectional prejudices—the marvel in that they staved off the inevitable rupture for so long.

12

The election was extremely close. With South Carolina not included, Mr. Polk's popular plurality was less than forty thousand. He lost his own State, Tennessee—in spite of General Jackson and Mr. Pillow—by one hundred and thirteen votes, Delaware

by two hundred and eighty-two; he won by as many as ten thousand votes in not more than four States, Mr. Clay in one only. But if the Abolitionists had voted for Mr. Clay he would have been elected by seventeen Electoral votes.

It was, Mr. Calhoun thought, "a great political revolution," and in London—where they were still worrying about the annexation of Texas and slavery—the *Times* proclaimed that it was a triumph of the Slave over the Free, of an adventurous and unscrupulous democracy, aided by the foreign population, over the austere and dignified republicanism of New England.

And among the Whigs—among the Democrats, too, some of them—there was dismay, and sorrow, "agony" and "aching hearts." The resolutions and the letters came pouring in to gallant Harry. "I have never before witnessed such disappointment, distress and disgust. The feeling seemed to pervade all classes. I have heard men of the opposite faction express their regret at the success of their party . . . My own child wept bitterly"—"You had a majority of the legal votes throughout the Union. One thing, however, is certain. You had nine-tenths of the virtue, intelligence and respectability of the nation on your side"—"Whatever partial triumphs we have won have been achieved by honest American hearts . . . No levies have been made upon the prisons and lazar-

houses of Europe; no Canadian mercenaries or Hessian auxiliaries have been either pressed or purchased into our service."

And in Mr. Polk's mail there were many requests from office seekers, and the advice that he ignore the "old hunkers" of the Democratic party and distribute his patronage—in the good old Jacksonian manner—to the young men. For them it was all very glorious.

But still people continued to ask, just *who* is James K. Polk?

The Compromisers

1848 and 1852

THE COMPROMISERS

1848 and 1852

1

1845, and Mr. Polk was President, and Mr. Polk was a good party man; the Democrats had Texas, they were given a Sub-Treasury, they secured their southern, *ad valorem* Walker tariff of 1846, they got their Mexican War. As for Oregon, now that the presidential campaign of 1844 was over, they forgot "Fifty-four forty or fight!" and the Oregon plank in their platform, and were quite content to compromise on the line of Forty-nine. To the Whigs these circumstances were very dreadful.

And the commotion over slavery could not be stilled; it was, henceforth, never to be stilled—pushed, for a time, into a sound proof chamber by the compromisers of the early Fifties, but never stilled—until its final belligerent settlement in the Sixties. And in 1846 and 1847, while legislation was under debate with reference to such territories as might be acquired from Mexico, the terms of a certain proviso, presented by Mr. Wilmot of Pennsylvania—

but written by the Van Burenite Mr. Brinkerhoff of Ohio—had Congress, and the entire nation, by the ears. For the Wilmot Proviso demanded the prohibition of slavery in all territory to be acquired.

The Proviso was defeated; but a doctrine had been formulated which was to enlist partisan public opinion to the exclusion of all other issues, to solidify the increasingly antagonistic sentiment of the North and South, and to cause the formation of a new party —sprung from the eventual determination of both existing political groups to ignore the vital actuality of the problem of slavery; a determination made evident already in the campaign of 1848 by the failure of either national convention, Democratic or Whig, to express itself on the Proviso, at a time when the American people were thinking of nothing else.

And more immediately, in 1847, the discussions—in Congress, in the press and in popular assemblies—concerning the Proviso opened men's eyes to the imminent possibility of disunion, to the gulf which was deepening between the two sections of the country, and to the spirit of faction aroused by the recent Democratic measures and, in Democratic circles themselves, by the setting aside, in 1844, of Mr. Van Buren.

"Hunkers" and "Barnburners," the Administration men and the Van Burenites—the Democrats were at loggerheads, and the Whigs took heart.

The Democratic dispute was centered in New York, always the political trouble maker among the States, the home of discord and intriguing cliques. There the conflict over the Federal patronage between the old time Democrats, the "Hunkers"—those who "hunkered" for office—and the disgruntled Van Burenites, led by Silas Wright, the "Barnburners"—because they professed themselves prepared to "burn" their "barns" in order to rid them of the opposition "rats"—was to result in the loss of the State, and of the country, by the Democratic party in the approaching presidential election.

Mr. Polk had tried to soothe the Van Buren group by offering the secretaryship of the Treasury to Mr. Wright, and later to Mr. Butler, another Barnburner; and it did not appear at first that he subscribed to the general Democratic belief that his failure in New York State in 1844 to receive a presidential vote equal to Mr. Wright's for Governor had been due to any deliberate Barnburner apathy towards his campaign. Indeed, after the Democratic defeat in the State in 1846, which lost Mr. Wright his post, Mr. Polk was of the opinion that "it was attributable to the bad faith of that portion of the Democratic party in New York opposed personally to Governor Wright, called Old Hunkers . . . This faction shall hereafter receive no favours at my hands if I know it." But the Barnburners were convinced

that they were being neglected in the distribution of patronage, that Mr. Polk had privately opposed Mr. Wright and that the Hunkers were being purposely favored by the Administration; and it was true that after a second New York Democratic defeat in 1847 Mr. Polk had come to the conclusion that it was the Barnburners in their turn who were "wholly inexcusable and . . . responsible for the defeat of the party."

This dispute, caused primarily by the avidity for office exhibited by both clans—it was Mr. Marcy, the eventual Hunker Secretary of War, who had promulgated the famous Democratic phrase "To the victors belong the spoils"—and fostered by the resentment of Mr. Van Buren's followers, was destined to create a condition of hostility in the Democratic party which survived Mr. Wright's death in 1847, spread beyond the borders of the State and made possible the breach through which the Whigs were to advance to victory.

2

But the Whigs themselves were far from being united, and presidential aspirants were springing up on all sides—Judge McLean, General Scott, Mr. Clayton, Mr. Corwin, and of course Daniel Webster and Henry Clay; although many Whigs were beginning to doubt the wisdom of again nominating a

leader who had been so often defeated and whose candidacy would inevitably prove unwelcome in the abolitionist North.

But while the politicians were pondering these matters, the people suddenly began to take the question of the presidential nomination into their own hands, and a furore of popular support, expressed in countless resolutions and mass meetings, swept the country for General Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready," one of the heroes of the Mexican War. A Louisiana convention brought his name forward in February, 1848; the Alabama Legislature named him formally; in Baltimore, Philadelphia, everywhere, the cry of "Rough and Ready" arose from public assemblies with the demand that he be run independently of such action as the national Whig convention might take with regard to him. A non-partisan movement, apparently, which embraced many Democrats.

To the Whig managers this was extremely disconcerting. In the first place, was General Taylor a Whig at all, was he not just as much of a Democrat, was he anything except a soldier? This worthy warrior who admitted that he had never voted. The General himself refused to say; he would accept any nomination, including the Democratic, provided it came to him without any pledges on his part; if elected "I would not," he announced, "be the mere President of a party . . . I should feel bound to

administer the Government untrammelled by party schemes"; he had "no private purposes to accomplish, no party projects to build up, no enemies to punish—nothing to serve but my country." This was all very novel and disturbing.

The most they ever got out of him was that "I have no hesitation in stating . . . that I am a Whig, though not an ultra one," and "that if the Whig party desire . . . to cast their votes for me, they must do it on their own responsibility, and without any pledges from me." He would not refuse the Whig nomination "provided I am left free of all pledges, and permitted to maintain the position of independence of all parties." He was not "a party candidate, and, if elected, shall not be the President of a party, but the President of the whole people." Aside from that, he had never stated that he was in favor of the tariff of 1846 or of the Sub-Treasury, or that he would select his cabinet from both parties, and on all questions of policy "the will of the people, as expressed through their representatives in Congress, ought to be respected and carried out by the Executive."

And one thing more.

"I do not design to withdraw my name if Mr. Clay be the nominee of the Whig National Convention . . . or to withdraw my name from the canvass whoever may be the nominee of the National Convention either of the Whig or Democratic party."

THE RIO GRANDE QUICK MARCH

From the cover of an old musical composition

To many Whigs these observations were entirely unsatisfactory, but there it was—they wanted to win, and the General would not withdraw, and the people were clamoring for him. The General did not seem to have any political principles, but on the other hand would not a solid Whig candidate—a faithful opponent, consequently, of the Mexican War—simply invite disaster at the polls? Why not accept this compromise candidate, this popular military hero? Steal him from the Democrats who could have had him had they so chosen, adopt the non-partisan idealism which the "Thunderer of the Cordilleras" had selected for his guerdon? At all events, although no one would admit it, the General's nomination by the Whig convention soon became a foregone conclusion.

The convention took place at Philadelphia, on June 7, 1848—with Louisiana voting by proxy for Texas—and on the fourth ballot General Taylor was nominated, over the heads of such adversaries as Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster. For the vice-presidency they chose Millard Fillmore of New York. The General thought it a mark of confidence in his honesty and integrity with "but few parallels anywhere," and went on "thankfully" accepting nominations "in various parts of the Union," Whig and Democratic alike, which were "generously offered me without pledges or conditions." Mr. Clay pretended not to be hurt,

and Mr. Webster flatly described the nomination as "not fit to be made."

And that was all. There was no committee on resolutions, no platform, no attempt at any enunciation of principles—since General Taylor could not be pinned down in advance. As for the Wilmot Proviso, a motion to approve it was promptly tabled by a large majority. No pledges, no promises, no issues, and above all no mention of slavery. Just a general in a cocked hat. It was all very, very simple, and very convenient.

3

It was a year of conventions. The Native Americans, at Philadelphia, had recommended General Taylor with General Dearborn as Vice-President; the Liberty Party were again in the field with John Hale and Leicester King—but only temporarily, for their nominees were to withdraw after the Barnburner convention; the radical wing of the Abolitionist party, calling themselves the Liberty League, convened at Rochester, in June, and named Gerritt Smith and the Reverend Charles Foote, who were not heard from again—Gerritt Smith, who had recently announced that he was in favor of stopping the Mexican War, returning the territory seized and asking the forgiveness of God and of Mexico for the "wholesale murder" of Mexicans, and that he would

abolish the army, the navy and the customs duties, give away the public land, allow no distinction between native and foreign citizens, and forbid the holding of public office by any individual who was a slave owner or who sanctioned the sale of intoxicating beverages; in June, also, the labor organizations met in Industrial Congress at Philadelphia, selected the same Gerritt Smith and William Waitt, and listened to a poem by Mr. Dugdale setting forth that—

> "Too long hath man his fellow creature spurned,
> Too long the toiling millions deeply mourned,
> Up the steep hill the ceaseless wheel have rolled,
> Till all their tears and blood have turned to gold,
> Filled the swol'n coffers of the grasping crew,
> Till hope and love shrieked out their last adieu."

But the Democrats were not concerned with the farewell shrieks of hope and love. They met at Baltimore, on May 22; double and in some cases triple delegations from all the States except South Carolina, which was represented by a single gentleman who had been appointed by a local group consisting of less than a dozen citizens. But they allowed him to take his seat, and passed a ruling that in future each State should send only the number of delegates equal to its Electoral vote. And they adopted the two thirds rule again, appointed the first National Committee in American political history—and sat

back for two days to listen to the counter claims of the delegations from New York.

For there had been, inevitably, two conventions in the State, and two groups of delegates chosen—thirty-six Hunkers and thirty-six Barnburners—and each delegation now demanded recognition from the national convention, to the exclusion of the other. And the Hunker convention had tabled the Wilmot Proviso, but the Barnburner convention had declared itself in favor of it. And the national convention finally agreed to seat both delegations, but with the understanding that they should, together, cast not more than the official thirty-six votes of the State. It was a magnificent compromise, but the Hunkers, no more than the Barnburners, would have nothing to do with it, although they were prepared to support the convention's nominee while the Barnburners withdrew definitely from the conclave.

And on the fourth ballot Lewis Cass of Michigan, a good "northern man with southern principles," was nominated, outrunning Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Woodbury, Mr. Dallas, Mr. Calhoun and one or two others —but not Mr. Polk, for Mr. Polk was not mentioned—and the vice-presidential choice fell upon Mr. Butler of Kentucky. Mr. Cass was in Washington, and "in a fine humour" when Mr. Polk sent for him to congratulate him; a gentleman who, according to Mr. Channing, "had a great reputation in his day,

although the reason for it is somewhat indistinct at the present time"—the reason being, perhaps, simply that he was a sturdy expansionist, a great believer in the Union, a worthy northwesterner possessed of great personal popularity.

And then the platform, for the Democrats were not afraid to announce a platform—up to a certain point. The platform of 1844 in general, with its 1840 denunciation of any interference with slavery, to which were added resolutions justifying the Mexican War as having been provoked "by years of insult and injury" on the part of Mexico, praising the courage of the officers and soldiers who had "crowned [the country] with imperishable glory," and offering "fraternal congratulations" to the National Convention of the newly established Republic of France.

And stating that—

"with the recent development of this grand political truth—of the sovereignty of the people and their capacity and power for self-government, which is prostrating thrones and erecting republics on the ruins of despotism in the Old World—we feel that a high and sacred duty is devolved . . . upon the Democratic party . . . to sustain and advance among us constitutional liberty, equality and fraternity, by continuing to resist all monopolies and exclusive legislation for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, and by a vigilant and constant adherence to those principles and compromises of the

Constitution which are broad enough and strong enough to embrace and uphold the Union as it was, the Union as it is, and the Union as it shall be, in the full expansion of the energies and capacity of this great and progressive people."

But when Mr. Yancey of Alabama offered a resolution expounding that—

"the doctrine of non-interference with the rights of property of any portion of the people of this confederacy, be it in the States or Territories thereof, by any other than the parties interested in them, is the true republican doctrine recognized by this body"—

when Mr. Yancey offered this disturbing resolution, which ventured to concern itself with the immediate problems of the day, the convention refused to adopt it; and another resolution demanding that the delegates "repudiate the Wilmot Proviso" had to be withdrawn, after "a scene of considerable confusion."

There must be no unnecessary agitation over the subject of slavery, nothing to annoy the Democrats of the North. The new French Republic and the ruins of despotism in the Old World were so much more important.

4

The recalcitrant Barnburners had not done with rebellion. In a convention held at Utica, on June 22

—attended by delegates from New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio and Wisconsin—they listened to a letter from Mr. Van Buren in which he told them that he was determined to retire from public life; that the extension of slavery was a moral curse; that they must stand firm and choose a candidate of their own; and that he was himself in favor of free territories. The convention naturally nominated him by acclamation, and gave him Henry Dodge of Wisconsin, who declined the honor, as running mate.

The Hunker Democratic press exploded. Mr. Van Buren had split the party and given the Electoral vote of New York to General Taylor—he had, indeed, done precisely that—Mr. Van Buren would now sink for ever, and this was also true; Mr. Van Buren would never have dared if General Jackson had been alive, for "the roar of the lion of the Hermitage would have kept the fox in his hole"—but there is no way of knowing whether this was true or not. Quite probably not, one suspects.

But that was not all. If there were Democratic rebels there were also Whig deserters. The tabling of the Wilmot Proviso resolution by the Whigs at Philadelphia had left fifteen irreconcilables to inaugurate a movement for a national convention of all those dissatisfied with the nominations of both parties; and on August 9, 1848, at Buffalo, they met—some four hundred delegates from seventeen States, to-

gether with thousands of persons come from all over the northern Union, assembled in a tent capable of holding ten thousand people erected in the city park, since there was no hall in Buffalo large enough to accommodate them all. Northern Whigs and Democrats, political opponents on many questions of national policy, but drawn together by their common approval of the Wilmot Proviso, exemplifying the breaking up of old party lines in favor of the sole, paramount issue of slavery.

A "union of freemen, for the sake of freedom, forgetting all past political differences, in common resolve to maintain the rights of free labor against the aggressions of the slave power, and to secure free soil for a free people;" recognizing the dissolution of the "national party organizations heretofore existing" and the consequent "necessity of the union of the people under the banner of free democracy;" planting themselves "upon the national platform of freedom in opposition to the sectional platform of slavery." The "Free Soilers," ancestors of the modern Republican party.

And they proposed "no interference by Congress with slavery within the limits of any State," but it had always been "the settled policy of the nation not to extend, nationalize or encourage, but to limit, localize and discourage slavery, and to this policy, which should never have been departed from, the

government ought to return." And they declared that it was "the duty of the Federal Government to relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence or continuance of slavery" wherever it possessed the constitutional authority to legislate on that subject; and that the true and "only safe means of preventing the extension of slavery into territory now free is to prohibit its existence in all such territory by an act of Congress."

And that–

"we accept the issue which the slave power has forced upon us; and to their demand for more slave States and more slave territory our calm but final answer is no more slave States and no more slave territory. Let the soil of our extensive domains be ever kept free for the hardy pioneers of our own land, and the oppressed and banished of other lands seeking homes of comfort and fields of enterprise in the New World."

And so—with various other demands, including the granting of free land to settlers in the wilderness and "cheap postage for the people"—they inscribed on their banner "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor and Free Men, and under it will fight on, and fight ever, until a triumphant victory shall reward our exertions." And as nominees to carry the banner, Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams.

It was in many respects a strange bed for Mr. Van Buren to lie in, but he accepted; and the Liberty

Party merged with the Free Soilers; and the Democrats remembered that Mr. Adams had once called Mr. Van Buren a "servile dough-face," and published it in a pamphlet entitled *A Looking Glass for the Worthies of the Buffalo Convention,* in which the event was set forth as—

"the union of the Houses of Lindenwald and Braintree—a marriage extraordinary between all that is superlative and rampant in modern Democracy, and all that is cold, selfish, austere and vinegar-like in the remains of American aristocracy, dying out and tapering off in the third generation."

It was something to laugh at, and to sneer at, Mr. Van Buren and his Free Soilers—it did not seem important, significant, prophetic, heavy with drums. To them, in 1848, it simply meant that New York would probably go Whig, and a curse on the Barnburners; they could not foretell the bells of St. Michael's in Charleston, twelve years later, ringing out *Auld Lang Syne.*

5

So they went to the polls—on the same day for the first time in all the States, except in South Carolina, which was still appointing its Electors by the Legislature—without excitement and without enthusiasm. A canvass without apparent issues of any moment,

except on the part of the negligible Free Soilers, which merely decided, according to Mr. Garrison, that "a Whig General should be made President because he had done effective work in carrying on a Democratic war." For it was evident long in advance that the Whigs would win—a minority victory in the popular vote—and if the Barnburner Free Soilers were negligible, still were they important, for they caused the loss of New York's thirty-six votes to the Hunkers, and it was by a majority of exactly thirty-six Electoral ballots that General Taylor was elected.

And he felt "neither exultation or gratification," and considered the presidency "more as a bed of thorns than one of roses;" it had been a vicious, personal campaign, marked by the "vilest slanders of the most unprincipled demagouges this or any other nation was ever cursed with, who have pursued me like blood hounds." So it seemed to Old Rough and Ready.

And just to show that a non-partisan President did not have to be ungrateful to those who had served him, General Taylor did not "think it wise to kick away the ladder by which I ascended to the presidency." There were "plenty of good Whigs," he thought, "just as capable and honest, and quite as deserving of office, as the Democrats who have held them through two or three presidential terms. Rota-

tion in office, provided good men are appointed, is sound Republican doctrine." And so out with the Democrats—there was a certain Nathaniel Hawthorne among them, at the custom house in Salem—and in with the Whigs, the good, deserving Whigs, just as fast as possible in the good old Jacksonian manner—only the shoe was on the other foot.

But there again there was trouble, centering as usual in New York State, so that Mr. Clay had to write that—

"it is undeniable that the public patronage has been too exclusively confined to the original supporters of General Taylor, without sufficient regard to the merits and just claims of the great body of the Whig party"—

with the result, for instance, that a Mr. Abraham Lincoln was not able to secure the General Land Office post which he so earnestly desired. And in New York, Democrats or Whigs it made no difference, there were always two factions. Now it was Vice-President Fillmore's faction and Senator Seward's. And Thurlow Weed had tried to arrange an understanding between them, but Mr. Fillmore seemed to possess greater influence with the President for the New York appointments were all going to anti-Seward men. So that Mr. Seward and Mr. Weed had to take counsel, how best to supplant Mr.

Fillmore in the Executive favor, and in due time this was accomplished, to the further detriment of Whig harmony.

But in any case the Whigs were not to be any more fortunate with their general of 1848 than they had been with the one of 1840. There was a fatality that pursued the Whig Presidents. For just as the northern Whigs were agreeably discovering that their slave owning southerner—their pig-in-a-poke leader, so to speak—was not disposed unduly to uphold the slavery element in politics, he died, quite unexpectedly, on July 9, 1850. And Mr. Fillmore, who was supposed to be a safe anti-slavery man, suddenly turned out to be a mere compromiser, a supporter of measures which some of his northern partisans detested—partly, perhaps, because Mr. Seward was of the latter. It was General Harrison, and Mr. Tyler, and the Bank all over again, and it was important, because at the time of General Taylor's death they were discussing the great slavery Compromise of 1850.

6

They had done their best, during the campaign of 1848, to ignore the whole question—slavery in the new territories, the Wilmot Proviso, all those disturbing matters—but in 1849 Congress and the entire nation were again boiling with sectional ani-

mosity over the proposed setting up as States of New Mexico and California, the latter with its local Constitution forbidding slavery, and over the attempt to abolish the institution in the District of Columbia. The country seemed to be plunging into active disunion, the event was the open subject of speeches in the House and Senate, when in January, 1850, Mr. Clay came forward with his compromise measures. Some financial and boundary adjustments; California admitted as a free State; the interstate slave trade and slavery in the District not to be interfered with, but the importation of slaves into the District for sale to be stopped; a more stringent law looking towards the enforcement of the clause in the Federal Constitution under which fugitive slaves were returnable to their masters—the failure to return them and the assistance offered to runaways in the North being one of the great southern grievances—and no restrictions regarding slavery applied to the other territories acquired from Mexico. Some concessions to the North, some concessions to the South, and a shifting of the responsibility regarding slavery from Congress to the people in the Territories. Non-interference.

The resolutions were the occasion for a famous debate in the Senate, more especially famous in retrospect since it witnessed the last important political and oratorical appearance of the great trio, Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster. They were ill,

all three of them, the two youngest sixty-eight; Mr. Clay so weak that he had to be helped up the Capitol steps, Mr. Webster filled with oxide of arsenic and other treatments, both of them to die in 1852; Mr. Calhoun too sick to speak himself, all wrapped up in flannels while he listened to Senator Mason read the speech which he could not deliver, but his spirit blazing through the eyes which were to close forever within the month. Mr. Clay explained his measures; Mr. Calhoun opposed them—the Union, he insisted, could be preserved only "by conceding to the South an equal right in the acquired territory" and by ceasing "the agitation of the slave question"—and on March 7 Mr. Webster arose to make the speech which ruined him with his northern Whigs. He was, to the northerners incomprehensibly, in favor of the compromises, and as for the return of fugitive slaves, it was the South which was right under the Constitution, and the North which was wrong.

Many others spoke during the long debates—over the compromises, over the "Omnibus Bill" which for a while embodied some of them, over the separate acts which finally covered them—the months passed and Senator Foote threatened Senator Benton with a pistol on the floor of the Senate; the Nashville Convention of slave States met, General Taylor died, and with him the Executive opposition to the Compromise since Mr. Fillmore—possibly in order to

annoy Senator Seward, or because Mr. Webster was Secretary of State now—was determined to support it; and in the North anti-slavery men were cursing Daniel Webster and his speech. He was a fallen star, "Lucifer descending from Heaven." He had sold his conscience for the presidency. Theodore Parker knew "no deed in American history done by a son of New England to which I can compare this but the act of Benedict Arnold." Daniel Webster was reviled and cast out—in spite of those who saw more calmly the necessity of abiding by the Constitution in the matter of the fugitive slaves—and all the more so because his attitude and influence were powerfully responsible for the adoption, one by one, of the measures, and for the creation of a reluctant public sentiment in their favor in the North.

And among all the reasons advanced by historians for his action—a desire to postpone the unavoidable conflict of secession until the North should be stronger in men and more united in principle, personal ambition, whatever—perhaps his own reason, as expressed in a letter to Mr. Pettigru of Charleston in 1852, is the simplest; that—

"the *hoi polloi* of the Whig party, especially in the North and East, were, in March 1850, fast sinking into the slough of free soilism and abolitionism. I did what I could to rescue the country from the consequences of their abominable politics. I disdain to

DANIEL WEBSTER

From an etching by Johnson

seek the favor of such persons, and I have no sympathy with their opinions. You are of the South, my dear Sir, and I of the North; but if the degrees of latitude which divide us were ten times as many as they are, your thoughts and my thoughts, your hopes and my hopes for the good of the country would still rush together in a warm, glowing sentiment and a fervent prayer for the preservation of the Union. God help the right."

The preservation of the Union. That was what Mr. Webster, Mr. Clay, Mr. Fillmore no doubt, all the compromisers, were thinking of, striving for. It was to be accomplished by this Compromise of 1850, which paved the way for the fatal Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854; by this Fugitive Slave Law, which the radical North had no intention of observing; by this arrangement in the new Territories whereby they were to be "admitted into the Union, with or without slavery as their Constitution may prescribe at the time of admission," an arrangement which was indirectly to lead up to the tragedy of "Bleeding Kansas." Once and for all, they thought, the question of slavery had been removed from Congress; it was no longer, would never be again, a political issue; the Compromise was a *final* settlement of all past differences, a criterion for all future decisions. The case was closed.

The Whig party thought so, all but the Abolition-

ists, since a Whig Administration had accomplished it. The Democratic party on the whole thought so, and saw itself reunited and confident on the eve of a presidential campaign. The nation thought so, and celebrated with guns, and bells, and mass meetings ignoring the manifestations of the radicals in both the North and South. The Fugitive Slave Law was after all merely an enforcement of the Constitution; the settlement of the slavery dispute was a finality; the country was saved.

And the country had been getting just a little weary of all these Wilmot Provisos, and Abolitions, and Secessions. All this fist pounding and shouting. Now for a little peace, until something entirely different turned up to get excited over.

7

When it came time for the presidential campaign in 1852, the Democrats knew exactly what to do. Cheer for the compromise measures, and find a compromise candidate who could cement the recent union of their factions. Of course there were always Mr. Cass and Mr. Buchanan, and the "Little Giant" Douglas of Illinois, and several others; but as Mr. Burke wrote to Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, in April—

"the three most prominent candidates for the nomination are Cass, Buchanan and Douglas. Gen. Cass

I think now has most friends . . . Next to him Douglas is the most prominent . . . Mr. Buchanan seems to have but very little support out of Pennsylvania. Therefore the struggle will be between Cass and Douglas.

"The old experienced politicians here are of the opinion that it will result in the defeat of both . . . Now in my judgment if at the proper time at the convention you will allow your name to be used as a compromise candidate you stand as good a chance of the nomination as any man I can now think of." Mr. Burke had "asked southern gentlemen . . . and they have invariably responded most favorably . . . Hence I believe that you are among the very probable candidates for the presidency, if you will allow your name to be used at the right time."

Franklin Pierce, who had served in the Mexican War as a Brigadier General under General Scott, had been nominated in January by his State's convention, and had declined, as he had previously declined a nomination for the governorship, an appointment to the United States Senate—from which he had already once resigned—and the offer by Mr. Polk of the attorney generalcy. Perhaps on account of a personal weakness which beset him; at all events, when he was being persuaded to reconsider his refusal of a presidential nomination, Mr. Rhodes—who had conversed with one of the gentlemen concerned in the scheme—states that "it is said that the delicate

matter of his excessive conviviality was talked over with him and that he promised to walk circumspectly should he become President." And now General Pierce replied to Mr. Burke that "the aspect of things has materially changed . . . I must leave the matter to my friends at W[ashington] looking as I am sure they will to what is my duty and what may be the best interests of the party."

The Democratic Convention assembled in Baltimore on June 1, and for thirty-four ballots Mr. Cass, Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Douglas were leading. But Mr. Burke had been very busy, he had insisted that the first mention of General Pierce's name should come from some other State than New Hampshire, and on the morning of June 5 he was able to write to his protégé that—

"we are in great hopes of nominating you this morning. The thing is about ripe. We have intimations from the delegations from Pennsylvania and Virginia that they will soon lead off for you . . . The prospects are more encouraging than ever. But you know the whole thing is contingent. So do not be too much elated. If God and the people give you the nomination and election, bear your honors calmly, meekly and with dignity. I have no doubt you will . . . We are all excited here . . . the convention is about to work."

On the thirty-fifth ballot Virginia gave its vote to General Pierce, and during the next thirteen ballots

his total slowly increased until he was ahead of Mr. Douglas and Mr. Buchanan. And on the forty-ninth ballot, in a riot of yelling delegations, the convention suddenly stampeded for the General and selected William King of Alabama as Vice-President.

"I wrote you this morning," Mr. Burke notified the presidential nominee, "that in all probability you would be nominated . . . We have all done the best we could for you. We have pledged you to nothing except that you would be honest, faithful, true, discreet and just. We have no doubt you will fulfill all these pledges . . . The scene in the convention was grand—sublime. The cannon has already heralded your success. Mighty destiny, be true to it . . . The enthusiasm is tremendous. You unite all cliques . . . *You will be elected* . . . King is Buchanan's bosom friend and thus a great and powerful interest is conciliated. Our nominations also please both wings of the Democratic party in New York. They were content with slaying each other and both will cordially unite on you . . . The slave States will fall into our laps like ripe apples . . . I think you will be elected because all cliques of the democracy are united on you as they were on Mr. Polk."

And so it was—

"Come rally all, the bugle call
Above the field is heard;
With Pierce and King the breezes ring,
And all the land is stirred;

The hill tops and the valleys pour
Their legions to the fight,
From sea to sea, from shore to shore,
The council fires burn bright!
So boys fling out the standard sheet,
And let the welkin ring;
We're bound to give the Whigs defeat
With gallant Pierce and King."

And to the platform of 1848 they added two resolutions. That "the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made." And that the party would abide by—

"a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures . . . the act for reclaiming fugitives . . . included; which act, being designed to carry out an express provision of the Constitution cannot with fidelity thereto be repealed, nor so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency."

They had to read the last one twice, in the midst of a tremendous din of applause, and a great roaring of laughter at the mention of the Fugitive Law—that anathema of the abolitionist North—the responsibility for which was almost certain to wreck the Whig party.

Whereupon—

"Democracy is for the free!
Aristocrats can do
With greed that makes the people bleed
To glorify the few;
The Whigs may ban the working man,
And scorn his swarthy hand,
Democracy will hold him up,
The glory of the land!
So boys fling out the standard sheet,
And let the welkin ring,
We're bound to give the Whigs defeat
With gallant Pierce and King."

8

The Whigs were considerably worried. Mr. Clay was out of it; "considering my age, the delicate state of my health, the frequency and the unsuccessful presentation of my name on former occasions, I feel an unconquerable repugnance to such a use of it again;" and in any case he did not see "any such general allusion to me" as even to require a public statement of his withdrawal.

The nomination rested, then, between Mr. Webster and Mr. Fillmore, and neither of them could expect to carry the anti-slavery North. On the other hand, no candidate avowedly opposed to the Compromise could expect to carry the rest of the country. A compromise nominee must be found, and to many minds the name of Winfield Scott presented itself. He was a popular hero, he was a general—the Whigs were

always successful with their generals—and no one knew, or tried very hard to find out, just where he stood on the Compromise.

The Whig Convention met at Baltimore, on June 16, in a blare of partisan bands drowning out the secret conclaves of intriguing managers, and the southern delegates proceeded at once to draw up the platform which the convention was to adopt. Aside from generalities and tariff provisions, it announced that the character of the Federal Government was limited, that the governments of the States should be held secure to their reserved rights, that the Union ought to be "revered and watched over as the palladium of our liberties," and that—

"the series of [compromise] acts . . . the Fugitive Law included, are received and acquiesced in by the Whig party . . . as a settlement in principle and substance of the dangerous and exciting questions which they embrace; and . . . we will maintain them and insist upon their strict enforcement . . . And we deprecate all further agitation of the question thus settled, as dangerous to our peace, and will discountenance all efforts to continue or renew such agitation, whenever, wherever, or however the attempt may be made; and we will maintain this system as essential to the nationality of the Whig party and the integrity of the Union."

There it was—the Whigs and Democrats were in perfect accord and there was to be no fundamental

issue in the campaign. That it foretold the last appearance in presidential politics of the Whig party was probably not appreciated by any of the delegates who listened to Mr. Choate while he appealed to the northern objectors to "let him who doubts . . . whether it were wise to pass these [compromise] measures look back and recall with what instantaneous and mighty charm they calmed the madness and anxiety of the hour."

In other respects, the convention was simply the scene of Mr. Webster's final tragedy. It was understood, behind the doors, that the southern Fillmore delegates would drop him eventually, and that, while most of them would then turn to General Scott, still enough of them could be found to vote for Mr. Webster and secure his nomination if only he could provide forty northern votes of his own.

"If the Webster Whigs at the North . . . desert and go for Scott," Edward Curtis explained to Peter Harvey, "then the *game is up*—no chance is given to the South to turn from Fillmore to Webster . . . With all the noise now made *Fillmore cannot get a majority,* and [it] will be a cruel business in the Webster men of the North to go off for Scott before we give Mr. Webster a chance to get the South. If there were any danger of having Fillmore hoisted on us, by adhering to Mr. Webster, the case w'd be very different. We have a *certainty* that Fillmore will fall short . . . Under these circumstances there is no

excuse for anybody to quit Mr. Webster who affects to prefer him."

They moved Heaven and earth, the Webster managers, they took every precaution—they had already sent him word that "it is the universal sentiment, *Let not Mr. Webster make another speech*"—they went from delegation to delegation in the North begging for votes, just a handful of votes, but it was useless. Senator Seward controlled New York for General Scott, Massachusetts had no charity for its distinguished son, Maine had never forgiven him for the Ashburton Treaty. It could not be done. The South waited, and the forty northern Webster votes were not forthcoming. On the fifty-third ballot General Scott was nominated, with William Graham of North Carolina as Vice-President.

It was a terrible blow to Mr. Webster, a "chagrin as profound as [his] entire nature," that his "southern brethren . . . had neither the courage or kindness to place me on the record of that convention . . . I would rather," he said, "have had *their record* than the nomination." Everything in the Webster home, on the evening after the nomination, reminded Mr. Choate of a funeral, "of the first meal after the return from the grave." An emotion "too deep for utterance." Mr. Webster was overwhelmed, and in July he was telling his son that—

"I confess I grow inclined to cross the Seas. I meet here so many causes of vexation and humiliation growing out of the events connected with the convention that I am pretty much decided and determined to leave the Department . . . and either go abroad or go into obscurity."

On October 24 he died. Mr. Clay had already preceded him.

9

The Democratic and Whig disaffection resulting from all these compromises was again expressed in the nomination at Pittsburgh, in August, of John Hale and George Julian by a Free Soil convention which—after condemning slavery, the Fugitive Law, the compromise measures and the "doctrine that any human law is a finality and not subject to modification or repeal"—voiced its conviction that—

"no permanent settlement of the slavery question can be looked for except in the practical recognition of the truth that slavery is sectional and freedom national; by the total separation of the general government from slavery . . . and by leaving to the States the whole subject of slavery and the extradition of fugitives from service."

And that—

"the Free Democratic party is not organized to aid either the Whig or the Democratic wing of the great

slave compromise party of the nation, but to defeat them both; and that, repudiating and announcing both as hopelessly corrupt and utterly unworthy of confidence, the purpose of the Free Democracy is to take possession of the Federal Government, and administer it for the better protection of the rights and interests of the whole people."

But the Whigs were not listening. They were too busy counteracting the northern attitude that "we accept the candidate but spit upon the platform," and trying to stir up enthusiasm—by means of rallies, a veterans' encampment at Niagara, torchlight processions—for their own somewhat disappointing general, while laughing at the Democrats' cocked hat, of whom in his campaign biography Mr. Hawthorne could find very little to say. General Pierce, they maintained—in a campaign which had of necessity to be personal since there were no real issues involved—was a drunkard and a coward. He had fallen off his horse in a fainting fit during one of the Mexican battles. General Scott himself flatly denied the charge aimed at his adversary, but the Whigs had to make a song of it, to the effect that—

> "Two Generals are in the field,
> Frank Pierce and Winfield Scott;
> Some think that Frank's a fighting man,
> And some think he is not.

'Tis said that when in Mexico,
While leading on his force,
He took a sudden fainting fit
And tumbled off his horse!"

To which the Democrats replied with—

"Hail to the Chieftain, whose laurels already
Our foemen would sever and treat with disdain;
But the Democracy, serried and steady,
Shout from the Inland all round to the Main—
Glory *has* decked his brow!
Up with each banner now,
Let the old war song thrill mountain and wave—
Song that a Jackson met,
Strong with the chorus yet,
Hurrah for the cause of the free and the brave!"

And as for General Scott—pompous, conceited old "Fuss and Feathers," as they had called him in the army—he was, the Democrats insisted, nothing but a Free Soiler, a creature of Senator Seward's, a "nativist," a coiner of phrases; the gentleman who had once left his office to take "a hasty plate of soup," who had said that what soldiers dreaded most was "a fire upon the rear." Fuss and Feathers, Fire upon the Rear, Hasty Plate of Soup—these were to be catchwords of the campaign, and—

"True, the Aristocrats, proud and vainglorious,
Point to a Scott with his sabre and plume;
But he who only in war is victorious
Ne'er to high councils of state should presume.

Feathers and Soup and Fuss,
They cannot frighten us,
We have a chief great with pen or the glaive;
So for the coming rout,
Democrats, thunder out
Hurrah for the cause of the free and the brave!"

And for that matter—

"We have got the ball a-rolling,
We will soon the votes be polling,
And we'll set the bells a-tolling
Doleful music for the Whigs;
For in spite of all endeavor,
Hasty soup and fuss and feather,
They must hurry up Salt River
When November's ides are past!"

10

And the Whigs, too, sensed their approaching defeat, and decided as a last resort to send their candidate on a tour of the West. Stump speaking by the presidential nominees was considered undignified, General Pierce himself was staying quietly at home—but the Whigs found an excuse. Their general had recently been appointed to investigate the merits of Blue Lick Springs, in Kentucky, as a military sanatorium, and it was in his official capacity—"on a mission of public charity," not for a moment "to solicit your votes"—that he visited Pennsylvania, Ohio,

Franklin Pierce

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

From an engraving by Hartman

Kentucky and other States during the fall of 1852.

He made a considerable number of rather fatuous speeches, none of them of a political character, which the New York *Herald* promptly published as a Democratic campaign document, entitled "The Modern Epic" or "The Iliad of the Nineteenth Century;" and since the general had been accused of "nativism," he never missed an opportunity of referring graciously to the adopted citizens, proclaiming his pleasure whenever in the crowds around him he overheard "the sweet German accent" or "the rich Irish brogue"—for he loved to hear it, "that rich brogue . . . it makes me remember noble deeds of Irishmen."

He would have done much better, of course, to have stayed at home.

But General Pierce, for all his public reticence and decorum, was not neglecting the foreigners either. They had hardly finished cheering his nomination at the convention when the busy Mr. Burke was writing to him that—

"I have made arrangements already with Dr. Hebbé . . . a man of . . . great influence with the German population, to . . . publish [the Pierce campaign biography] in that language . . . Another German will take the stump for you. I know these men well. They can do more for you with the foreign population than all others."

And not only that, but *"I am in correspondence with Kossuth"*—the great Hungarian patriot who had arrived a little while before in America—

"and through Dr. Hebbé can do something with the foreign population. Kossuth has great influence with them and will naturally suppose *without any assurance* that a northern Administration will sympathize more with the popular movement in Europe than a southern or Whig Administration. Kossuth should be invited to New Hampshire, but should receive nothing from you but courtesies and civilities."

Kossuth should be invited, and no doubt encouraged in a discreet way, but nothing to commit General Pierce's Administration. In fact Dr. Hebbé was obliged to inform Mr. Burke that—

"I have had letters from General Kossuth in which he complains much of the deception which certain persons of the Democratic party have made themselves guilty of in regard to himself—and I have had the utmost difficulty in preventing him from taking steps which would undoubtedly have led to the disorganization and defeat of the Democratic party . . . I know that he expected from General Pierce a still more explicit avowal in regard to the course of foreign policy which this country ought to pursue."

A still more explicit avowal.

11

"Oh we'll rally, singing, shouting,
And we'll give the Whigs a routing,
For we haven't got a doubting
Democrat in our ranks;
With our people's column steady,
Native and adopted ready
For the battle, we will spread a
Mighty terror 'mong the Coons."

General Scott only carried four States; he was two hundred thousand votes behind General Pierce in the popular vote, two hundred and twelve in the Electoral. The Whigs had received a tremendous Fire upon the Rear; after all the Fuss and Feathers, there was nothing left for them but another Hasty Plate of Soup.

The Buchaneers

1856

THE BUCHANEERS

1856

1

"I AM satisfied slavery will not go down until it goes down in blood."

In 1853—with General Pierce in the Executive Mansion and the triumphant Democrats securely controlled by the southern wing of the party—this dark utterance, formulated in 1843 by John Quincy Adams, was capable of calling forth only the most confident, the most pitying derision. The Compromise of 1850 had settled the question of slavery forever. There *was* no question of slavery any more—however much a rabid abolitionist faction at the North might still foam at the mouth over it. The southern Whigs and Democrats were delighted to have it so; the northern Whigs did not dare to have it otherwise, for fear of antagonizing their southern partisans; in the minds of many northern men, both Democrats and Whigs, the dread of the consequences of any sectional agitation made it imperative to have it so. Slavery, as a political issue, had been buried—buried

alive, perhaps, but eternally interred. So they were all determined to believe.

The South—and the South was now firmly in power—the South was prompt to discover in the new dispensation the possibility of settlement, settlement by slave owners, in other new territories in which a popular referendum to determine the ultimate free or slave status should be resorted to only when the time came for actual statehood; the South was quick to imagine the horizons of slavery—that institution which it considered vital to its existence and socially beneficent to master and slave alike—indefinitely extended to include Mexico, Central America, the West Indies; quick to guild its imperial dream of expansion, to occupy itself with the filibustering of Mr. Walker in Nicaragua, with the acquisition, financial or forceful, of Cuba.

It was in this spirit that the South was, later, to rally to Mr. Walker's ill fated standards; that, in 1854, it welcomed the Manifesto promulgated at Ostend by Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Mason and Mr. Soulé —the American Ministers to England, France and Spain—to the effect that Cuba was essentially a part of the United States, that an offer of purchase should be made to Spain, and that, in the event of refusal, "by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power."

It was the old Texas state of mind of 1844; it was to prevail throughout the subsequent Administration of Mr. Buchanan; its motive was frankly set forth when, at the close of the decade, Senator Brown of Mississippi was exclaiming that "I want Cuba; I want . . . one or two . . . Mexican States; and I want them all for the same reason, for the planting and spreading of slavery . . . I would spread the blessings of slavery, like the religion of our divine Master, to the uttermost ends of the earth."

The South believed in slavery—just as sincerely, as earnestly as the North detested it—not only as an economic principle, but as a social philosophy, a religious cult, a code of life. Far from being a moral crime, a sin against humanity, slavery, in most southern eyes, was a virtue, the only possible foundation for a sane, well ordered society, sanctioned by the example of the Scriptures and of classical antiquity, a source of prosperity and happiness—material and moral—to both the slave owner and his slaves. And if in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—that literary sensation of the Fifties—and in certain publications originating in the South itself, the North thought to find a final judgment on the iniquity of slavery, Mr. Fitzhugh was soon, in 1854, to expound the creed of a lofty Christianity supported by a righteous slavery, a millennium of peace and good works, in his celebrated *Sociology for the South.*

It may appear incredible in retrospect; at the time, in 1852, in 1853, it was a burning faith, a crusader's conviction, and the Compromise of 1850, with its famous "finalities," was the open door to a new era. The South was standing on the Mountain of Abarim, looking out over the Promised Land. "All they ask from us," Mr. Buchanan was shortly to explain to his northern friends, "is simply to let them alone." That was all that the South had ever asked of the North. And now, at last, no one was ever going to raise the general question of slavery again controversially. That was understood and accepted, as well by the North, the moderate North, as by the South.

It was monstrous, therefore—simply on the face of it, quite aside from its legislative features—a betrayal of the Compromise, a treason so to speak against both North and South, to have Senator Douglas of Illinois come walking into the Senate just then and stir up the whole hornet's nest once more with his astonishing Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

2

It was a Bill to establish new Territories, at first one then two, Nebraska and Kansas—to the west of Iowa and Missouri respectively, and presumably to be settled by them—to be admitted as States "with or without slavery, as their Constitution may prescribe."

And not only that, the act was not intended "to legislate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions." This was Mr. Douglas's new theory of "popular sovereignty"—a development of Mr. Cass's earlier doctrine of "squatter" or "local sovereignty" —a theory according to which the *settlers* in a Territory were to decide the question of slavery for themselves.

It had been granted, under the Compromise of 1850, that the citizens of New Mexico and Utah should so decide for themselves when they came together to organize as States; now it was Mr. Douglas's contention that the settlers in any Territory could forthwith exercise this right; that the principles of the Compromise of 1850 so enlarged were applicable to all Territories; and that as a result of this last Compromise the earlier Missouri Compromise had been set aside, so that the northern slavery boundary line of Thirty-six Thirty, in force since 1820, was no longer valid. The new Nebraska Territory, for instance—situated north of the old Missouri Compromise line—could become a slave territory if it so desired, the Kansas Territory conversely a free territory, and both of the proposed new Territories could legislate on the question as soon as settled without waiting for the establishment of actual statehood.

It had apparently not originally been Mr. Douglas's intention to repudiate the Missouri Compromise, of which, in 1849, he had said that it had "become canonized in the hearts of the American people, as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb." It had not occurred originally to anyone that such a repudiation was to all intents implied in the Compromise of 1850, if it was actually to effect any finality of settlement. But now in January, 1854, with the Kansas-Nebraska Bill before an uneasy Senate, Mr. Dixon of Kentucky—arguing that Congressional non-interference with a Territory's domestic affairs must of itself annul the provisions of the Missouri Compromise—moved the repeal of the latter as an amendment to the Bill.

No one, probably, was more astonished than Mr. Douglas. His play with fire had not been designed to produce so consuming a flame, but he immediately decided to make himself responsible for the greater conflagration. He would sponsor the amendment. The repeal, he told Senator Dixon, would produce a great stir in the free States; he would be assailed by demagogues and fanatics; he would probably be hung in effigy—he was, from Maine to Illinois—and become permanently odious in many quarters; his decision might terminate his political career. But he considered it his duty, a step due to the South—where the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise had

often been questioned—and due to his own character for consistency.

Mr. Douglas may have been sincere, and General Pierce too when he agreed to the repeal on the ground of unconstitutionality, although in his first message to Congress the President had promised that the "repose" of the country should "suffer no shock during my official term if I have power to avert it." If, on the other hand—as many of Mr. Douglas's contemporaries believed, as many historians have since maintained—it was simply a politician's trick in order to curry presidential favor with the South—"a desire to buy the South at the presidential shambles"—there is no possible justification for Mr. Douglas's action. If, as some have thought, the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was only a move in the Missouri senatorial contest of that year, for the purpose of aiding Senator Douglas's friend Mr. Atchison, the motive is even more shabby.

For the measure destroyed the nation's peace, it ignored the spirit of compromise in which men were striving to preserve the Union, it alarmed the South with its reopening of the question of slavery in the Territories, it infuriated the North with its revocation of the precious Missouri Compromise, it brought about the ultimate disintegration of the two national parties, it precipitated a frenzy of discussion, a pageant of tragedies, which were not to cease until the Civil War had run its course.

Mr. Douglas was an extremely able lawyer, a forceful orator, a small but powerfully built man possessed of unending courage. In his early days in the House, John Quincy Adams had described his vulgarity, his passionate, vitriolic delivery, his lack of restraint and breeding. When he spoke, "his face was convulsed, his gesticulation frantic. . . . In the midst of his roaring, to save himself from choking, he stripped off and cast aside his cravat, unbuttoned his waistcoat, and had the air and aspect of a half naked pugilist." Later on Mr. Douglas had acquired a veneer, he had learned to control himself although his tongue had lost none of its venom—opposition newspapers talked of his "senatorial billingsgate," of his "vehemence of abuse," of his style "more becoming a pot-house than the Senate"—he had developed a personality which had won for him a following second only to that which Mr. Clay had commanded. He was the Little Giant of the West. He was, at the same time, the perfect politician of his day, endlessly ambitious, his whole mind and heart set on the presidency.

One may perhaps venture to state that the delicacy of the national adjustments in 1854 deserved a more disinterested vision, a more unselfish statesmanship, than Mr. Douglas was able to provide. Only the ruthless hand which he himself had deprecated could so recklessly have dared to tamper with the public stability. It is difficult to exonerate him of criminal

James Buchanan

From an engraving by Hall

triviality in the presence of his statement that the Democratic party had "consumed all its powder" in the election of General Pierce, and therefore would have "no more ammunition for its artillery" without a deep reaching agitation. How deep reaching it was evidently not within his capacity to appreciate —for out of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill came "Bleeding Kansas" and the Anti-Nebraska party, and out of the latter the "Black Republicans," and from their midst the tall, unexpected figure of Abraham Lincoln. And the guns of Sumter.

And with it all the fearful comedy which occasionally enlivens the ponderous march of fatal events; for in 1873 Montgomery Blair was to write to Gideon Welles that Mr. Seward had told him that he, Seward, "was the man who put Archy Dixon . . . up to moving the repeal of the Missouri Compromise . . . and had himself forced the repeal by that movement, and had thus brought to life the Republican party." Mr. Seward did not include the Civil War, for some reason, in the list of his achievements.

3

Mr. Douglas was to have need of all his intellectual powers, all his courage. During the five months of bitter debates in Congress, with their uproars and violence—while the resolutions and petitions poured in from the North against the "Nebraska iniquity"—

and after the final passage of the Bill, when he saw himself damned from one end of the northern Union to the other for his repeal of the Missouri Compromise. He could, he said, now travel from Boston to Chicago by the glare of his own burning effigies; he received letters rejoicing in the death of his wife and wishing him further calamities; he was branded a Benedict Arnold, a Judas Iscariot; all one evening in Chicago he faced a furious crowd threatening him with pistols, retiring finally in the early hours of a Sunday morning with the remark flung at them that "I'll go to church, and you may go to hell"—whereupon they tried to throw his carriage into the river.

The North was boiling, sectional partisanship blazing again, roaring at the "Nebraska swindle;" everywhere groups of Anti-Nebraska men were organizing politically, combining with Free Soilers and northern Whigs and Democrats, and in the local elections of 1854 the Democratic party encountered serious defeats. But now, suddenly, there was something else to attract the public attention temporarily, so that Mr. Douglas could proclaim that the Kansas-Nebraska agitation had been forgotten.

It had to do with mysterious squares of paper, black, or white, or red, posted up on trees, summoning men to midnight meetings; with oaths, and grips, and passwords—"What time? Time for work," "Are you? We are"—with all the paraphernalia, lodges,

degrees and Councils of a secret order, the O. U. A., which, in 1854 and 1855, claimed to be sending a million voters to the polls. It was the Order of United Americans—the Order of the Star Spangled Banner in New York, where the movement apparently originated—sprung from the old Native American Associations of the Forties, and from their successors, the social organizations of the American Brotherhood, the United Daughters of America, the American Protestant Association and many others; the members of which, Protestant native Americans only, were pledged to oppose the Roman Catholic Church and the election of foreigners to office, and to vote as ordered by the society. The "Know Nothings," as they came to be called, from the fact that when a member was questioned concerning the order he invariably answered "I don't know."

And now in 1854 there seemed to be lodges and Councils in every city and State; the "Americans" were winning victories in many local elections; the political character of the order was no longer concealed, the Republicans and Anti-Nebraska men of the West were in alliance with them, in the South they had entirely absorbed the Whigs. But in November, at Cincinnati, the National Council instituted the Third, or Union Degree, and a ritual intended to please the South; and at the Council of 1855 it became evident that the southerners were in

complete control of the "American Party," with a southern president of the order and resolutions condemning any interference with slavery.

This circumstance was to destroy the power of the Know Nothing party, and split it North and South on the slavery question—leaving it, as Horace Greeley saw it, a party "as devoid of the elements of persistence as an anti-cholera or an anti-potato-rot party would be"—in 1854 and 1855, however, the Know Nothings were a nine days' wonder, sufficient to hold the popular interest, and they were still to play their part in the presidential contest of 1856.

4

But now dreadful things were happening in Kansas, the Know Nothings were in turn forgotten, and the country began to reap the whirlwind of the Kansas-Nebraska storm.

For since the new Territories were open to occupation by settlers who were to decide the question of slavery for them, it had occurred to Eli Thayer and sundry New England gentlemen to organize the Emigrant Aid Company for the purpose of sending free settlers to Kansas. Free settlers and their families, supplies, Bibles and arms. The free status of Kansas was to be determined by an invasion from New England, an artificial settling of the Territory which would normally have depended on Missouri

for its colonists—something which the supporters of slavery had not thought of in connection with the other Territory of Nebraska.

The Missourians first—and later the entire South—were not disposed to tolerate what they considered a flagrant abolitionist attempt to steal Kansas from the slavery fold. The Territory had been intended for the Missourians—let the northerners go to Nebraska where they belonged—and the Missourians came pouring in, to found communities, and vote, and quarrel with the intruders. The Blue Lodge, the Social Band—under various names, and with varying grips and passwords, the members of a quickly spreading secret society crossed the Missouri-Kansas border, whenever there was voting or perhaps a little trigger fingering to be done; they established themselves in the Territory as residents; they were reinforced later by recruits from many sections of the South, enlisted by the Sons of the South, and by the South Carolina Society for the Aid of the Slave Settlement of Kansas, for two could play at the New Englanders' game. Very serious trouble was brewing.

It broke out in March, 1855, when some five thousand Missouri "border ruffians," as the free settlers termed them, came riding across the line to control the Territorial Legislature election, so that only pro-slavery delegates were appointed. The Free State

men protested, but Washington would not listen to them—it was the Administration point of view that the attempted New England seizure of Kansas was in effect a violation of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill—and at Topeka, later on in the year, they adopted an anti-slavery Constitution of their own which President Pierce was to condemn as revolutionary. There were now two governments in Kansas, two claimants for recognition by the Federal authorities, two bitter factions in the land. And in November, 1855, the first free settler was murdered.

It is not within the scope of these pages to furnish any detailed account of the terror which followed. The Wakarusa War, the burning of Lawrence, the Pottowatomie massacre perpetrated by John Brown and his sons, murders, raids and ambuscades, treachery and reprisal, the open hostilities of armed bands and the nocturnal cantering of secret riders—these are to be found in the archives of the Territory. Kansas was bleeding; the North was howling vengeance; in the Senate, a southern gentleman was beating Senator Sumner with a cane for his "Crime against Kansas" speech, while members of Congress went armed with pistols to their furious deliberations. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill had borne its fruit.

It was in this spirit, with the cry of "Bleeding Kansas!" ringing in their ears, that men approached the presidential election of 1856.

5

The Know Nothings were the first to meet in formal national convention; at Philadelphia, on February 22, when they were given the platform which the National Council had already drawn up.

That "Americans must rule America; and to this end native born citizens should be selected for all . . . offices of government employment;" that non-interference with domestic affairs should govern the relations of Congress with the States, and of the States with each other; that—

"none but those who are citizens of the United States . . . and who have a fixed residence in any . . . Territory, ought to participate in the formation of a Constitution or in the enactment of laws for said Territory;"

that a change should be made in the naturalization laws—

"making a continued residence of twenty-one years . . . an indispensable requisite for citizenship . . . and excluding all paupers and persons convicted of crime from landing upon our shores;"

that any union between Church and State, and any interference with religious faith or worship, must be prevented.

And that the party was opposed to—

"the reckless and unwise policy of the present Administration . . . as shown in removing 'Americans' . . . and conservatives in principle from office, and placing foreigners and ultraists in their places . . . as shown in reopening sectional agitation by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; as shown in granting to unnaturalized foreigners the right of suffrage in Kansas and Nebraska; as shown in its vacillating course on the Kansas and Nebraska question."

These were the important planks, and immediately there was a dispute relating to the Council's authority to draw up such a document, and to its failure to include a clause "interdicting slavery in territory north of Thirty-six Thirty by congressional action." Delegates from New England, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Iowa withdrew from the convention—with a telegram to the Anti-Nebraska men then meeting at Pittsburgh to the effect that "the American party is no longer a unit; the National Council has gone to pieces; raise the Republican banner. The North Americans are with you"—and the remaining regulars nominated Millard Fillmore, and Andrew Donelson of Tennessee.

As for the seceding delegates, they later chose a former Governor of Pennsylvania, William Johnston, for Vice President, and Mr. Banks, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, for President—and

when he withdrew, the selection made eventually by the Anti-Nebraska men was ratified.

They had been active politically for some time, the Anti-Nebraska men, in combination with Free Soilers and northern Abolitionists; they had held a mass meeting at Ripon, in Wisconsin; another at Jackson, Michigan, in 1854, announced the formation, finally, of the new Republican party—sprung, therefore, from the old Free Soil movement, and from the agitation against Mr. Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska legislation. And in 1855, in a speech at Albany, Mr. Seward had proclaimed that the principles of the new party were "equal and exact justice; its speech open, decided and frank; its banner . . . untorn in former battles and unsullied by past errors. That is the party for us." The great New York leader and his Whigs had joined the Republican ranks.

And now, in February, 1856, at Pittsburgh, they were holding their first official convention; adopting a long address to the people of the United States; listening with surprise to Mr. Greeley, in his long white coat, while he counseled moderation; turning with more satisfaction to hear the Reverend Owen Lovejoy exclaim that—

"in defense of Kansas I will offer myself as a captain, and if I am not wanted in that capacity, I will shoulder a gun and go as a private. If I use my Sharp's

rifle, I will shoot in God's name. I am for war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt, if it must be so."

This was the sort of talk to thrill the delegates in La Fayette Hall—the "Black Republicans," as the southerners called them, since their sole cause was the negro's—and with high enthusiasm after many speeches they issued the summons for a national nominating convention at Philadelphia, in June.

6

Enthusiasm was still high pitched, the anticipation of success and the conviction of a righteous issue very pronounced, when they met on June 17; a great throng of delegates from all the northern States, from Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Virginia and the District of Columbia, and from the Territories of Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas. A great throng of delegates, with little regard for any proportionate representation, so that New York and Pennsylvania cast one hundred and seventy-seven ballots between them, as against the sixty-two Electoral votes to which they were entitled.

But if men had supposed that Mr. Seward would be the standard bearer of the new anti-slavery party they were mistaken, for Mr. Seward would not allow his name to be used; and that of Justice McLean was likewise withdrawn, and also that of Senator Chase

on account of his too recent association with the Democratic party. And so, for reasons which, according to Mr. Channing, are "still hidden in the dimness of the past," Colonel Frémont was unanimously nominated, with William Dayton of New Jersey getting the better of the Illinois lawyer, Abraham Lincoln, for the vice-presidency.

John Frémont was of mixed French and Virginia blood; famed for his "explorations" in the Northwest which had earned for him the title of "Pathfinder," although he can scarcely be said to have followed any but already trodden paths; the hero, during the Bear Flag days of 1846 in California, of a raid from the official consequences of which only the timeliness of the Mexican War saved him; appointed "governor" of California, he had seen himself ordered back to his neglected exploring by the military authorities, and had ignored these instructions; he had finally been courtmartialled for mutiny and disobedience, dismissed from the army and pardoned by President Polk. He had preferred to resign; later on he had served briefly as Senator from California; his political experience was of the slightest; his views were not a matter of any public note; there were even gathered around his name certain allegations of financial irregularity which had not yet been explained.

But he was a conspicuous popular figure, a romantic, adventurous, dramatic character, the son-in-

law of Senator Benton, picturesque and plausible. The Republicans, looking for a personage of prominence to lead their first campaign, and not embarrassed by any very great freedom of choice, found him suitable.

The platform was extremely plain spoken and truculent. The Republicans were—

"opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, to the policy of the present Administration, to the extension of slavery into free territory; in favor of admitting Kansas as a free State, of restoring the action of the Federal Government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson."

They advocated the improvement of rivers and harbors, and the construction of a railroad to the Pacific. They declared—

"that the highwayman's plea that 'might makes right' embodied in the Ostend circular [concerning the seizure of Cuba] was in every respect unworthy of American diplomacy, and would bring shame and dishonor upon any government or people that gave it their sanction."

And they announced that—

"we deny the authority of Congress, of a Territorial Legislature, or any individual or association of individuals to give legal existence to slavery in any

An equal division of Property that is what I go
We look to you Sir to place the power of the Pope on a firm footing in this Country
De Popplation ob Color comes in first — arter dat, you may do wot you pleases —
You shall all have what you desire — and be sure that the glorious Principles of Popery, Fourierism, Free Love, Womans rights, the Maine Law & above all the Equality of our Colored brethren, shall be maintained; If I get into the Presidential Chair.
THE GREAT REPUBLICAN REFORM PARTY,
Calling on their Candidate.

THE GREAT REPUBLICAN REFORM PARTY

From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection

territory of the United States, while the present Constitution shall be maintained"

—so much for the Kansas-Nebraska Bill; that "it is both the right and the duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism, polygamy and slavery," for they had their eyes on the Mormons too; and that "the dearest constitutional rights of the people of Kansas have been fraudulently and violently taken from them; their territory has been invaded by an armed force"—they were referring to the Missourians, of course, not to the New Englanders—

"murders, robberies and arsons have been instigated and encouraged, and the offenders have been allowed to go unpunished—that all these things have been done with the knowledge, sanction and procurement of the present Administration; and that for this high crime against the Constitution, the Union and humanity, we arraign the Administration, the President, his advisers, agents, supporters, apologists and accessories, either before or after the fact, before the country and before the world; and that it is our fixed purpose to bring the actual perpetrators of these atrocious outrages, and their accomplices, to a sure and condign punishment hereafter."

To quiet minds, fearful of the fate of the Union, it was not a reassuring document.

7

The Democrats were still maintaining that theirs was the only real "national" party, and that the Whigs, Know Nothings and Republicans were the representatives of purely sectional interests; they were still sheltering themselves behind the ramparts of a policy of negative evasion in politics, of non-interference with slavery.

As usual, the State of New York was split by two Democratic factions, the "Hard Shells" and the "Soft Shells"—those who favored the South and those who opposed its demands—and when the national Democratic convention opened its doors, on June 2, at Cincinnati, delegates from both groups, as well as two contesting sections from Missouri—Benton and anti-Benton—presented themselves at the threshold. Indeed, some of the gentlemen from Missouri did not wait for the doors to open, but forced their entrance after knocking down the doorkeeper; so that the chairman of the convention found it necessary to pronounce a scathing condemnation of these riotous proceedings and to exclude the irregular invaders, the New York rivals being permitted to take their seats and share the vote of the State.

In the midst of the hurly burly of intrigue which preceded the convention, two names were always prominent, that of General Pierce who claimed the support of the South, and of course that of the Little

Giant, whose hold on the popular imagination had been in no wise diminished by the controversies of which he had made himself the center. And that of Mr. Buchanan of Pennsylvania, lately American Minister to England. For by many it was felt that General Pierce and Mr. Douglas had been too closely associated in the public mind with recent animosities; Mr. Buchanan, on the other hand, had been out of the country, he had had nothing to do with the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and with "Bleeding Kansas," he had few enemies in the North, he had, according to the Richmond *Enquirer,* never "uttered a word which could pain the most sensitive southern heart."

And if in 1848 he had been most anxious to secure the Democratic nomination—so that Mr. Polk had to record in his diary that "my impression is that all [Buchanan's] opinions are formed and controlled by the consideration of the means best calculated to enable him to succeed in getting the nomination"—later on, in December, 1855, Mr. Buchanan was writing to Mr. Slidell that he had notified "many friends that I would not be a candidate for [the presidency] . . . I had hoped that this would prevent any movement in my own State in my favor," and "no desire lurks in my bosom to become President."

But Mr. Slidell was telling him that—

"the people are taking care of you, and the almost universal admission by politicians . . . that you are

the only man for the crisis, is an unmistakeable indication of the force and depth of the popular current."

The feeling "of contempt for Pierce in the Senate is general," and Mr. Buchanan must express a willingness to run "to some discreet friend or friends." And Mr. Buchanan had finally been willing—but so reluctantly—to "write no more letters declaring I was not a candidate;" his Pennsylvania adherents had begged him to agree to that, and "I could not resist such an appeal proceeding from such friends." And in any case Mr. Buchanan did not believe "that the next President . . . would encounter insuperable difficulties. . . . The question [of slavery] has been settled by Congress"—how desperately certain of it they insisted on being—"and this settlement should be inflexibly maintained."

The Missouri Compromise was gone, "and gone forever," although "if I should be asked to denounce the Missouri Compromise this would be asking me to eat my own words;" but—

"it has departed—the time for it has passed away, and I verily believe that the best, nay, the only mode now left of putting down the fanatical and reckless spirit of abolition at the North is to adhere to the existing settlement."

Still, "what if the Cincinnati convention should denounce the Missouri Compromise as unconstitutional,

unjust and violative of southern rights, and ask me to mount upon this platform?" But "I do not believe I shall ever have to decide this question," and Mr. Slidell was positive that—

"there is not the slightest reason to apprehend that a declaration of the unconstitutionality of the Missouri Compromise, or any other doctrine to which you cannot fully subscribe, will be adopted at Cincinnati. Everyone feels the imperative necessity of selecting our best man for the presidency, and there is no disposition to encumber him with make-weights."

No disturbing declarations—only prudence, negativism and evasion.

And when it seemed as though the Douglas and Pierce forces might combine to support the General, Mr. Slidell went to Cincinnati, and talked Mr. Douglas out of it, and secured Mr. Buchanan's nomination on the seventeenth ballot, by promising the vice-presidential post to Mr. Breckinridge of Kentucky. "I was induced," Mr. Slidell informed the latter, "to urge your nomination . . . by the earnest appeal of Richardson of Illinois"—the Douglas manager—"I considered your selection for the vice-presidency as a graceful and merited compliment to the friends of Douglas."

So it was arranged. As for the platform, they were in favor of free seas, the Monroe Doctrine and "pro-

gressive free trade throughout the world;" they asserted the "preponderance" of the United States in the adjustment of all questions arising out of the Panama route from the Atlantic to the Pacific, they could not but "sympathize with the efforts which are being made by the people of Central America to regenerate that portion of the continent which covers the passage across the inter-oceanic isthmus," and they demanded that "every proper effort be made to insure our ascendancy in the Gulf of Mexico and to maintain permanent protection to the great outlets through which are emptied into its waters the products raised out of the soil . . . of our western valleys."

And, with the inevitable resolutions condemning all slavery agitation and approving the Compromise of 1850, they declared that—

"a political crusade . . . against Catholics and foreign born is neither justified by the past history, or future prospects of the country, nor in unison with the spirit of toleration and enlightened freedom which peculiarly distinguishes the American system of popular government."

And that,

"claiming fellowship with and desiring the cooperation of all who regard the preservation of the Union . . . as the paramount issue and repudiating all sectional aims and platforms concerning domestic slavery

which seek to embroil the States and incite to treason and armed resistance to law in the Territories, and whose avowed purpose, if consummated, must end in civil war and disunion—the American Democracy recognize and adopt the principles contained in the organic laws establishing the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas as embodying the only sound and safe solution of the slavery question . . . the basis of the Compromise of 1850, confirmed by both the Democratic and Whig parties . . . ratified by the people in the election of 1852, and rightly applied to the organization of the Territories in 1854."

A bid, obviously, for the support of such Whigs as had not passed through the Know Nothing door into Republicanism.

8

The Whigs were the lost sheep of the campaign of 1856. "Shall we report ourselves to the Whig party?" Mr. Seward had asked in 1855. "Where is it? Gentle Shepherd, tell me where?"

Their dilemma was pitiful. Always a "national" party hitherto, opposed to sectionalism, and with positive tendencies in politics, they were faced now with only two choices, the national negativism of the Democrats or the ultra positive sectionalism of the northern and southern radicals. In order to remain national the northern Whigs must become negative, and avoid the issue of slavery; if they wished to be

positive they must endorse the sectional fervor of the Anti-Nebraska men and Republicans. In New York, Mr. Seward and his "Woolly Head" Whigs had decided on the latter course, the "Silver Gray" Fillmore Whigs had abstained. In the South, after a sojourn in the Know Nothing ranks, the Whigs had inevitably come to rest under the Democratic standard. Elsewhere, while the issue of Native Americanism had served its temporary purpose as a Whig stop-gap, thinking members of the party were at a loss to know which way to turn politically, and saw themselves assiduously courted by Democrats and Republicans alike.

A convention of sorts, in September, finally ratified the Know Nothing nominations of Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Donelson, and explained, a little pathetically, that—

"the Whigs . . . have no new principles to announce, no new platform to establish, but are content to broadly rest—where their fathers rested—upon the Constitution of the United States, wishing no safer guide, no higher law."

They regarded "with the deepest interest and anxiety the present disordered condition of our national affairs—a portion of the country ravaged by civil war, large sections of our population embittered by mutual recriminations," and they traced "these calamities to

the culpable neglect of duty by the present national Administration." They also declared, "as a fundamental rule of political faith, an absolute necessity for avoiding geographical parties," and that—

"all who revere the Constitution and the Union must look with alarm at the parties in the field in the present presidential campaign—one claiming only to represent sixteen northern States, and the other appealing mainly to the passions and prejudices of the southern States."

And they proclaimed that "the only remedy . . . is to support a candidate pledged to neither of the geographical sections now arrayed in political antagonism," and that—

"in the present exigency of political affairs we are not called upon to discuss the subordinate questions of administration. . . . It is enough to know that civil war is raging and that the Union is imperilled; and we proclaim the conviction that the restoration of Mr. Fillmore to the presidency will furnish the best if not the only means of restoring peace."

But to not a few Whigs, in the presence of the violent Black Republicans, these dignified lamentations of their party brothers were not adequate to express the danger of the times. Colonel Frémont and his group were, in their eyes, a menace to the Union, and it remained for the New Englander,

Rufus Choate, to interpret the dread of many conservative men, Whigs and Know Nothings.

"The first duty of Whigs," he wrote, "is to unite with some organization of our countrymen to defeat and dissolve the new geographical party calling itself Republican." The thing to be avoided was "the very ecstasy of . . . madness—the permanent formation and the actual triumph of a party which knows one half of America only to hate and dread it." If the Republican party were to secure the government—

"I turn my eyes from the consequences. To the fifteen States of the South that government will appear an alien government. It will appear worse. It will appear a hostile government. It will represent to their eye a vast region of States organized upon anti-slavery, flushed by triumph, cheered onward by the voice of the pulpit, tribune and press; its mission, to inaugurate freedom and put down the oligarchy; its constitution, the glittering and sounding generalities of natural right which make up the Declaration of Independence."

And so, with countless other Whigs, "in these circumstances, I vote for Mr. Buchanan."

9

The Republicans did not help themselves by the virulence of their campaign; by the savagery of their attacks on slavery, which took no account of the fact

that there were, to go no further, certain Constitutional and property rights involved which could scarcely be disposed of by the mere screaming of ethical generalities; by the continual din of their outcries against the murders of free settlers in Kansas—where actually some approximation of order was at last being restored—outcries which carefully ignored the John Brown atrocity, the concurrent murders of slave settlers by their own protégés. The Republicans seemed determined to keep Kansas bleeding before the people until after the election; their fanatic fury, the bitterness of mind and the viciousness of tongue which they displayed, alarmed, when they did not also disgust, all moderate men—the clergy and the *intelligentsia* of New Engand excepted.

"We see a political party," Mr. Fillmore said, "presenting candidates from the Free States alone. . . . Can they have the madness or folly to believe that our southern brethren would submit to be governed by such a chief magistrate? I tell you that we are treading on the brink of a volcano." And Mr. Buchanan believed that "should Frémont be elected, the outlawry pronounced by the Republican convention . . . against fifteen southern States will be ratified by . . . the North. The consequence will be immediate and inevitable."

Secession, and it is unlikely that any sufficient northern sentiment in favor of the prevention by force

of such an action could have been discovered in 1856. And if the North professed to sneer at "the stale disunion threat," the step was being advocated throughout the South as the only possible result of Mr. Frémont's election. The South could not be expected to submit itself to the rule of an Administration, the support for which would have been drawn exclusively from the hostile North. There were Democrats and Whigs in every State in the Union, but in all the South Mr. Frémont was only to receive two hundred and ninety-one votes, from Virginia. Were he to be elected, the Governor of that very State announced, "there will be a revolution," and he prepared to summon forth his militia—while Senator Mason notified Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, that in the event of a Republican victory "the South should not pause but proceed at once to immediate, absolute and eternal separation."

The campaign went on, in a blare of Frémont torchlight parades in the North; Rocky Mountain Clubs, Freedom Clubs, Pioneers with shiny axes; political clubs which marched from town to town, from one huge mass meeting to another—recalling the Whig processions of 1840—giving the famous new "staccato" cheer, distributing handbills, shouting for "Bleeding Kansas" and for "Free Labor, Free Speech, Free Men, Free Kansas and Frémont," drowning out the "Buck and Breck!" of the Demo-

He's a border ruffian! and I'll shoot the Slave-holding Villain
Stop! Stop My friends, I can't allow any fighting, there must be peace between you as long as I stand here
Let go! Let me at him! I'll make Mince meat of the rascally abolitionist!
FILLMORE.
BUCHANAN
THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE RIGHT PLACE.

THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE RIGHT PLACE

From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection

cratic "Buchaneers" with the promise to "take the Buck by the horns."

And the Know Nothings insisted that Mr. Frémont was a Catholic, and issued pamphlets concerning *The Romish Intrigue—Papist or Protestant, Which?* And the Democrats laughed at the Republican "shrieks for freedom," and made a point of decorum and quiet dignity. And for the first time in a presidential election, nearly one million dollars was spent by the contesting parties. And a few days before the vote, the *Independent,* a religious journal at the North, appealed to all "Fellow Christians! Remember it is for Christ, for the nation and for the world that you vote [for Frémont] at this election! Vote as you pray! Pray as you vote!"

10

The result was really decided, in the pivotal States of Indiana and Pennsylvania, by the preliminary local elections in October. Pennsylvania, Mr. Slidell had been informed—and had passed the word on to Mr. Buchanan—"is the great battle of the campaign. And if any amount of labor and money will secure it, they should be expended." And whether or not the Republican cries of fraud and bribery in the State were justified, Mr. Forney, the chairman of the Democratic Central Committee was willing to admit

afterwards that "we spent a great deal of money," although "not one cent selfishly or corruptly."

And it was to be remembered later, when Mr. Buchanan was urging the admission of Kansas into the Union with a pro-slavery Constitution of questionable validity, that the Democratic campaign banners in that important northern State of Pennsylvania had borne the legend "Buchanan, Breckinridge and Free Kansas." As Mr. Buchanan himself explained to Mr. Forney—

"The South must vote for me, and the North must be secured; and the only way to secure the North is to convince those gentlemen that when I get in the presidential chair I will do right with the people in Kansas. . . . I am not responsible for the Administration of President Pierce, therefore I will inaugurate a new system." And Mr. Forney "sowed the State with private letters and private pledges upon this question." There was not a county in Pennsylvania "in which my letters may not be found, almost by the hundreds, pledging Mr. Buchanan, in his name and by his authority, to the full, complete and practical recognition of the rights of the people of Kansas to decide upon their own affairs."

A "hot and heavy" fight, it appeared to Mr. Greeley. "There is every thing to do [in Pennsylvania], with just the meanest set of politicians to do it that you ever heard of." And nine days before the

voting, Mr. Dana thought that the Democrats were "terrified and demoralized." Mr. Frémont would win, and "the tide is rising with a rush, as it does in the Bay of Fundy, and you will hear an awful squealing among the hogs and jackasses when they come to drown."

But instead of that the crowds milling up and down the streets of Philadelphia on the night of the election heard that the Buchanan ticket had carried the State by some three thousand votes out of four hundred and twenty three thousand cast. Pennsylvania was safe for the Democrats in November, and so was Indiana.

11

Mr. Fillmore only carried one State, Mr. Frémont eleven, the New England States, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa and Wisconsin—where a snowstorm had prevented the Electors from meeting on the proper day, so that a long dispute arose in Congress over the counting of their technically illegal ballots. Mr. Buchanan had a minority of the recorded popular vote, fifty-two more Electoral votes than his two competitors together.

"You are not to lie in a bed of roses for the next four years," Mr. Slidell advised him, "but I feel the most entire confidence that you will be able to build up and consolidate a sound homogeneous national democracy that can defy the attacks of fanatics north

and south. I have almost as little sympathy with the Rhett [southern extremist] school of politicians as with the Know Nothing ruffians." And Mr. Slidell had a great deal to say concerning the formation of the new Cabinet.

Mr. Buchanan was very optimistic.

"The night is departing," he told his Pennsylvania friends, "and the roseate and propitious morn now breaking upon us promises a long day of peace and prosperity for our country. To secure this, all we of the North have to do is to permit our southern neighbors to manage their own domestic affairs, as they permit us to manage ours. It is merely to adopt the golden rule." As for Kansas, "I congratulate you . . . that peace has been restored to Kansas. . . . We shall hear no more of bleeding Kansas. There will be no more shrieks for her unhappy destiny. The people of this fine country, protected from external violence and internal commotion, will decide the question of slavery for themselves."

Indeed—

"viewed in the eye of sober reason, this Kansas question is one of the most absurd of all the Proteus-like forms which abolition fanaticism has ever assumed to divide and distract the country. And why do I say this? Kansas might enter the Union with a free constitution today, and once admitted, no human power

known to the Constitution could prevent her from establishing slavery tomorrow."

And in his letter accepting the nomination, Mr. Buchanan had already said that—

"the agitation of the question of domestic slavery has too long distracted and divided the people of this Union. . . . This agitation . . . now seems to be directed chiefly to the Territories, and . . . I think we may safely anticipate that it is rapidly approaching a 'finality.' The recent legislation . . . respecting domestic slavery . . . has simply declared that the people of a Territory, like those of a State, shall decide for themselves whether slavery shall or shall not exist within their limits. The Nebraska-Kansas Act does no more than give the force of law to this elementary principle of self-government. . . . This principle will surely not be controverted by an individual of any party professing devotion to popular government."

So once again everything was settled, once and for all. And Mr. Buchanan could not foresee that his own practical interpretation of these brave utterances was soon to bring about the complete disruption of the Democratic party. For whatever he might prophesy, they had not finished shrieking in Kansas, and Mr. Douglas had not said his last word on the subject of "popular sovereignty."

The Black Republicans

1860

THE BLACK REPUBLICANS

1860

1

"We shall hear no more of Bleeding Kansas. There will be no more shrieks for her unhappy destiny . . . I think we may safely anticipate that [the slavery agitation] is rapidly approaching a finality."

Mr. Buchanan was very confident of that in 1856, but he had not been many hours in office before Chief Justice Taney—speaking officially for the Supreme Court of the United States in the Dred Scott decision—startled the country again by announcing that a slave could not be considered a citizen, and that the Missouri Compromise "is not warranted by the Constitution, and is therefore void."

In the North this pronouncement was received with unbounded rage, and the assertion was made that the Supreme Court had "descended into the political mire. It has sullied the ermine; it has draggled and polluted its garments in the filth of pro-slavery politics." It was even believed by many that the decision was the deliberate result of collusion between

the Chief Justice and the outgoing and incoming Democratic Administrations, and widespread publicity was given to Justice Curtis's dissenting opinion, in which he stated that—

"I do not hold any opinion of this Court or any court binding when expressed on a question not legitimately before it . . . A great question of constitutional law, deeply affecting the peace and welfare of the country, is not, in my opinion, a fit subject to be thus reached."

And it was perfectly true that the Missouri Compromise and the citizenship of slaves formed no part of the legal point at issue in the Dred Scott case, in which the Supreme Court had simply been called upon to decide the free or slave status of an individual negro. But the Chief Justice and five of his associates—including the four southern judges—stirred, no doubt, by a praiseworthy desire to terminate the long slavery discussion, had seen fit to seize this opportunity for the rendering of what were considered irrelevant opinions concerning these Constitutional questions.

The South, on the other hand, and with it the Democratic Administration, received the Court's edict with delight. The Territories could not be closed to slave holders bringing with them their human property, and no action with regard to slavery could be taken prior to the establishment of state-

hood. Popular sovereignty in the Territories, or "squatter sovereignty," did not exist, and a Territorial Legislature had no more right to determine for or against slavery than Congress itself.

The Executive attitude was well displayed in Mr. Buchanan's later message to Congress in which he informed them that—

"I cordially congratulate you upon the final settlement, by the Supreme Court of the United States, of the question of slavery in the Territories . . . The right has been established of every citizen to take his property of any kind, including slaves, into the common Territories belonging equally to all the States . . . and to have it protected there under the Federal Constitution. Neither Congress, nor a Territorial Legislature, nor any human power, has any authority to annul or impair this vested right."

Once again, then, the famous controversy had been settled—but in the meantime Kansas had been shrieking, and Congress roaring, more bitterly than ever before.

2

General Pierce had already refused to countenance the Topeka free "insurgents" of Kansas, and Congress had recognized the validity of the pro-slavery government originally set up in the Territory, a representative of which had taken his seat in the House. And now, in February, 1858, this govern-

ment—by a process of undeniable deceptions—was presenting a Constitution to Congress, as a basis for the immediate admission of the Territory to statehood, for the purpose of putting an end to the Territorial conditions which for months had required the presence in Kansas of Federal troops as the only means of maintaining order. A Constitution permitting slavery, adopted at Lecompton by delegates chosen in an election from which the Free State adherents had absented themselves—as they again absented themselves when the slavery clause was perfunctorily referred to a popular ratifying vote.

And if, "as an individual," Mr. Buchanan had expressed an opinion "in favor of submitting the remaining clauses . . . to the people," as an official "neither myself nor any human authority had the power," he maintained, in spite of promises to the contrary—

"to rejudge the proceedings of the convention and declare the Constitution which it had framed to be a nullity. To have done this would have been a violation of the Kansas-Nebraska Act [and of] the great principle of popular sovereignty."

So Mr. Buchanan, sponsoring the Lecompton Constitution before Congress, interpreted his election pledges, and not entirely inconsistently.

It was simply a question of the legitimacy of the Kansas Territorial Government, and—

"a great delusion seems to pervade the public mind," Mr. Buchanan explained, "in relation to the . . . parties in Kansas . . . We are apt to refer merely to the existence of two violent political parties . . . divided on the question of slavery;" but the dividing line was "not between two political parties, both acknowledging the lawful existence of the government, but between those who are loyal to this government and those who have endeavored to destroy [it] by force and by usurpation—between those who sustain and those who have done all in their power to overthrow the Territorial Government established by Congress." This they would have accomplished, "had it not been . . . [for] the troops of the United States . . . A large portion of the people of Kansas have been in a state of rebellion . . . They have all the time been endeavouring . . . to establish a revolutionary government, under the so called Topeka Constitution."

And "this Topeka government, adhered to with such treasonable pertinacity, is a government in direct opposition to the existing government prescribed and recognized by Congress." The Topeka men should not have absented themselves from the Lecompton election, and—

"if Congress, for the sake of those men who refused to vote for delegates to the convention when they might have excluded slavery from the Constitution, and who afterwards refused to vote . . . when they might, as they claim, have stricken slavery from the

Constitution, should now reject the State because slavery remains in the Constitution, it is manifest that the agitation . . . will be renewed in a more alarming form."

The fact that those same men had recently voted jointly with great success to elect an anti-slavery Legislature, which the convention had managed to ignore, was not emphasized.

Mr. Buchanan's position was really quite impregnable, on the surface. He was the President of a negative, non-interfering party, and it was not for him—unless he chose courageously, and perhaps unwisely, to do so—to revive the old disputes of 1855, to enquire into the validity of that original election in Kansas when the Missourians had come riding across the border, to go behind the acts of a Congress which had accepted the pro-slavery Territorial Government, to maintain which troops of the United States were at the time encamped in Kansas when they should have been in Utah pacifying the Mormons. The Topeka government was not an official government, its adherents were in "rebellion" against the constituted and authorized Territorial Government, and the latter had submitted a Constitution, ostensibly according to law, which Mr. Buchanan endorsed. "With my deep convictions of duty," he could plausibly say, "I could have pursued no other course." It was not true, and a whole succession of

Kansas Governors were there to tell him so, but it was tenable. And it may have seemed the least of several evils.

The matter is important, since it was to split the Democratic party, read Mr. Douglas out of its Administration wing and contribute to the Black Republican success of 1860. For Mr. Douglas would not tolerate the Executive attitude, he came forward before the North to champion a free Kansas because he would not admit, and quite correctly, that popular sovereignty had been upheld by any scheme of statehood for the Territory which excluded the Topeka claims—and without popular sovereignty Mr. Douglas was a procession without a banner. He went at once to Mr. Buchanan and warned him that he would oppose the Lecompton project; and when Mr. Buchanan advised him to remember that no Democrat had ever opposed his own Administration without suffering destruction, as had been shown on several occasions during General Jackson's presidency, Mr. Douglas retorted that "Mr. President, I wish you to remember that General Jackson is dead."

And the battle began in Congress.

3

A notable battle which sometimes degenerated into a cat fight—as at the night session during which some thirty members indulged in fisticuffs—and the conclu-

sion of the matter was that the Senate passed a bill admitting Kansas as a State. To this bill the House, however, added an amendment requiring that the Constitution be referred again to a popular vote; and when the Senate accepted the change it also attached to the act an offer of public lands to be given to the new State if it adopted the Lecompton Constitution, otherwise it was the senatorial decision that the Territory would have to wait for statehood until its population reached the required limit.

To all intents a bribe of additional territory and immediate statehood in return for the ratification of the Lecompton Constitution—a bribe which the people of Kansas were actually to reject, in August, by voting down the pro-slavery document—and the passage of the measure was greeted prematurely at Washington with cheers and cannon as a great Administration victory over Mr. Douglas. For the Little Giant was now an enemy; a deserter who, after supporting the Kansas policy of General Pierce, had turned against his party; a traitor, in the eyes of the South, whose popular sovereignty was only an anti-slavery device, and of whom rumor spoke as in secret alliance with the Black Republicans. The hand of Executive vengeance fell upon his adherents in office, the Democratic press hounded him forth with abuse—some of it perhaps officially inspired—and there was nothing for him to do, in the fall of 1858,

but to go back to Illinois and seek re-election to the Senate.

And there, awaiting him as an opponent, he found the long Abraham Lincoln.

The two candidates toured the State together, debating jointly on the issues of the day, and it was during their Freeport meeting that the ungainly lawyer finally asked his famous question. "If Douglas answers," he had predicted, "he can never be President." Could the people of a Territory, Mr. Lincoln wanted to know, "in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen . . . exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?" The Supreme Court of the United States *versus* Popular Sovereignty.

Mr. Douglas could not ignore the question; he could only answer it to his greatest immediate, local advantage—and let the South think what it might for the time being—he could only endeavor, with all the political acrobacy at his command, to comply with the *obiter dicta* of the Dred Scott decision—as behooved a good Democrat—without abandoning the precious doctrine of popular sovereignty which was his principal presidential stock-in-trade.

And so, on the ground that the safeguarding by the Constitution of slave property rights in a Territory must be worthless unless sustained by local regulations which must themselves "depend entirely upon

the will and wishes of the people of the Territory, as they can only be prescribed by the local legislatures" —a statement of conditions strikingly suggestive of present day prohibition enforcement problems—Mr. Douglas replied that "the people have the lawful means to introduce [slavery] or to reject it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local police regulations." Consequently, "no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a slave territory or a free territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska Bill."

Mr. Douglas had saved the day, and his senator's seat in Illinois, but he had killed himself in the South, and the future with its presidency belonged to Abraham Lincoln.

4

"I am now in my sixty-ninth year," Mr. Buchanan was writing to Mrs. Polk in 1859, "and am heartily tired of my position as President."

Kansas, Nicaragua, the Mormons, slavery—it had all been very difficult, and there was still John Brown in store. The Republicans and Abolitionists were making a great noise at the North; Mr. Douglas was stirring up the troubled waters of Democratic faction, numbering his northern hosts for the presidential year; Mr. Buchanan was a weary Joshua who

allowed his hands to be upheld by the radical politicians of the South.

And in the South a new party had been forming, the party of Jefferson Davis and Robert Rhett, and especially of William Yancey. A party of action, as opposed to the negativism of the other Democratic leaders, of intense sectionalism to match that of the North. Men who cared for nothing but the South and its aspirations; a South within the Union or separated from it—it was all one to them—but an independent South, unhampered by the interfering North, free to pursue what they conceived to be its destiny; men who would have fought out the issue of slavery in Kansas to its bitterest end, rather than haggle, Toombs fashion, over local popular majorities; men who harangued the southern commercial conventions on the desirability of southern political emancipation and a reopening of the African slave trade as an offset to the importation of cheap foreign labor into the North—so that slave ships were actually fitted out in New York with readily subservient northern funds and sent out surreptitiously on their dark errands, until Mr. Buchanan, in his annual message to Congress, was obliged solemnly to occupy himself with these matters.

Men who may, some of them, perhaps many of them, have belonged to that great secret society, The Knights of the Golden Circle—ancestor of the later

and quite different northern Order of American Knights—which is known to have flourished in the South with its lodges, inner and outer temples, and commanderies, just prior to the Civil War. A society devoted to southern interests, to the maintenance and extension of slavery, to the politically positive consolidation of the southern States within their own borders and in the halls of Congress at Washington, where a committee of the society is reported to have sat in continuous secret conclave during the last months preceding secession. A society of which the passwords were said to be *Yecnay* and *Nuohlac,* in which it is not difficult to recognize Yancey and Calhoun.

Men, certainly, who learned of Mr. Douglas's verbal teeterings at Freeport with profound delight, knowing how irretrievably fatal they would prove to his cause in the South; and for whom the insane adventure at Harper's Ferry, in October, 1859, of the blood stained John Brown, and more particularly the nature of its reception in the North, were a final straw which was not to be borne. For he had hoped to incite an uprising of the slaves—another Nat Turner's massacre, although it was a curious thing how sluggishly the slaves responded—and when northern men of alleged intelligence, such as Mr. Emerson, had the audacity to greet John Brown as a "new saint" who would make "the gallows glorious

STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS

like the cross," the entire South went white with horror.

An attempt, supported by northerners, to reproduce Santo Domingo in Virginia—

"and when the desperadoes were arrested and punished, they were elevated to the honors of martyrdom; all the restraints of religion were cast aside, and the crucifixion of the Saviour of mankind blasphemed by impiously comparing with it the execution of a cut throat and a thief."

And as for those Black Republicans who approved of the outrage, "among a people not dead to all sense of virtue and decency, such a party could not prevail." The South was in a roaring fury; the Yancey press was all clarions and drums; there were feathers and a bucket of tar for every northerner who showed his face, bonfires for any copies that came to hand of Mr. Helper's *Impending Crisis of the South*—a recent book by a southerner criticising slavery—and on all sides the retaliatory cry arose.

"Don't trade with the North!" That was something the northerners could understand, an injury to their commerce, a calamity to their New England pocketbooks.

So the year turned, and it was time for a presidential election.

5

The Democratic national convention assembled in Charleston—for the opening on April 23, 1860—and if the raising of daily room and board to five dollars by the city landlords discouraged the attendance of many professional hangers on, political bravos and "plug uglies," still the town was packed to the eaves, the Mills House was overflowing with Douglas people, the Charleston Hotel was a bedlam of Yancey "Fire-eaters," and the Charleston *Mercury* saw that "where there should be confidence and harmony, it is plain that men feel as if they were going into a battle." The word "crisis" was on every tongue.

It was to be a battle to defeat Mr. Douglas and his Freeport, popular sovereignty doctrines—indeed, "let him be nominated and there will be such a warwhoop as never was heard in the land," some of the delegates were saying; a warwhoop from Mr. Yancey's supporters, from the partisans of Jefferson Davis, who had already been calling upon the Senate to safeguard slavery against the aggressions of territorial legislatures, from the entire extremist wing of the southern Democracy, intent upon positive, uncompromising action on behalf of the South and its institutions. "Ours is the property invaded," Mr. Yancey was to tell the Douglas men in his great address to the convention;

"ours are the institutions which are at stake; ours is the peace that is to be destroyed . . . ours is the honor at stake—the honor of our children, the honor of our families, the lives perhaps of all—all of which rests upon what your course may ultimately make a great heaving volcano of passion and crime, if you are enabled to consummate your designs."

But the northern Democrats, the cohorts of the Little Giant, were no less determined, no less belligerent. In Institute Hall, when the convention met —under that fresco upon which, in the opinion of an eye witness, there were to be seen "three highly colored but very improperly dressed females"—the question of the contested delegations from Illinois and New York was settled in favor of the Douglas adherents. And when the committee on resolutions brought in the platform, it was the Douglas men who forced the adoption of the minority report.

It had been the decision of the majority of the committee that—

"the Democracy of the United States hold these cardinal principles on the subject of slavery in the Territories: First, that Congress has no power to abolish slavery in the Territories. Second, that the Territorial Legislature has no power to abolish slavery in any Territory, nor to prohibit the introduction of slaves therein, nor any power to exclude slavery therefrom, nor any right to destroy or impair the

right of property in slaves by any legislation whatever."

This was the Yancey view, the southern view; it was the positive, aggressively sectional reply of the new southern party to Mr. Douglas's theories and political acrobatics, to the northern attempts to encroach upon what the South considered its rights. It was the ultimatum of a majority speaking for a group representing a minority of Electoral votes. And the Douglas men would not accept it.

For hours, day after day, the convention argued and quarreled—discussing, recommitting, laying on the table—in a pandemonium of incredible disorder before breathless galleries, sometimes—

"a hundred delegates upon the floor and upon chairs, screaming like panthers and gesticulating like monkeys . . . Not a word was audible. The reporters climbed upon their tables, the delegates mounted the chairs, the people in the galleries stretched their necks and hung over the balustrade."

And in the midst of it all, over at the hotel, a "great calamity" came upon the Ohio delegation, for—

"their private whiskey, of which they laid in a supply supposed to be equal to all emergencies, the nomination of Douglas included, gave out this morning . . . The Kentucky whiskey, too, is nearly all gone. The

barrel in which it is contained, and which occupies an honorable position . . . in their parlor, gives forth when consulted . . . a dismal tone of emptiness."

As for the platform, they finally pushed through the minority resolutions, confirming the principles of 1856 and announcing "that it is the duty of the United States to afford ample and complete protection to all its citizens, whether at home or abroad, and whether native or foreign." At the same time they rejected the only clause possessed of any real significance, to the effect that—

"inasmuch as differences of opinion exist in the Democratic Party as to the nature and extent of the powers of a territorial legislature, and as to the powers and duties of Congress, under the Constitution . . . over the institution of slavery within the Territories, Resolved that the Democratic Party will abide by the decisions of the Supreme Court . . . on the questions of Constitutional law."

It was a complete begging of the question by the Douglas men, the most "cowardly and contemptible thing," as one contemporary saw it, "in the history of platforms," and it infuriated a great part of the South. The Alabama delegation withdrew immediately from the convention, followed by Mississippi, Florida and Texas. Soon after, a majority of the delegates from Louisiana and South Carolina re-

tired, together with representatives from Arkansas, Delaware and North Carolina. On the following day, May 1, twenty-six of the thirty-three Georgians joined the seceded groups, and the three remaining South Carolinians were not long to brave the hisses which continually greeted them from the galleries.

The Democratic national convention had split in two.

6

There were great crowds in the streets of Charleston on the evening of April 30, tremendous demonstrations for Mr. Yancey when he spoke, processions and cheers in honor of a southern republic; there was "a Fourth of July feeling . . . a jubilee. There was no mistaking the public sentiment of the city. It was overwhelmingly and enthusiastically in favor of the seceders."

They met at once, on that same evening, and again on May 1, in St. Andrew's Hall—ignoring the sittings of the Douglas "rump convention," as Mr. Yancey called it—and for the next two days, as the Constitutional Democratic party, they convened in formal session in the Theatre, facing a stage set for the Palace of the Borgia, while "the dress circle was densely crowded by ladies." For—

"you see at once the patriotism of the Carolina ladies exemplified. There were not more than a dozen of

them to witness the proceedings of the Rump Convention . . . and here they were smiling upon the Constitutional champions of the South by hundreds . . . The principal feature of the convention was the ladies."

The ladies, and the platform. The principles of 1856 and of the national committee majority report, and these resolutions—that it was the duty of the Federal Government

"to protect, when necessary, the rights of persons and property in the Territories;" that "the government of a Territory organized by an act of Congress is provisional and temporary; and, during its existence all citizens . . . have an equal right to settle with their property in the Territory, without their rights, either of person or of property, being destroyed or impaired by congressional legislation;" and that "when the settlers in a Territory . . . form a State Constitution the right of sovereignty commences, and, being consummated by admission into the Union, they stand on an equal footing with the people of other States; and the State thus organized ought to be admitted into the Federal Union whether its Constitution prohibits or recognizes the institution of slavery."

And then, with speeches, they adjourned until June 11, at Richmond, where the expectation of certain events caused another postponement until June 25. And in the meantime, "the serpent of squatter sovereignty must be strangled!"

7

In the national convention, what was left of it, they had listened in a dazed way to some dramatic speeches from those southern delegates who still occupied their seats. For instance—

"be not deceived," Solomon Cohen, of Georgia, told them, "for in heart and in principle I am with those who have retired from the convention. Yet I have deemed it my duty to remain . . . with the hope that the cup of conciliation may not be drained to the dregs . . . I will stay here until the last feather be placed upon the back of the camel—I will stay until crushed and broken in spirit, humiliated by feeling . . . that the southern States are as a mere cipher in your estimation—that all her rights are trampled under foot."

Then, with a two-thirds rule based on the full membership of the original convention, they set about the business of nominating Mr. Douglas, out of a field of nine, including Jefferson Davis and Franklin Pierce. But when, on May 3, after fifty-seven ballots Mr. Douglas was still some fifty votes short of the necessary number, they adjourned to reassemble in Baltimore on June 18, with the understanding that the vacancies caused by retiring delegates should be filled. There was a great packing of portmanteaux that evening, a great jam on the cars—the "constitional" convention had itself just adjourned—and on

his train one newspaper reporter found "many distinguished passengers, there being about an equal number of United States Senators and keepers of Faro tables, the latter wearing decidedly the most costly apparel." It had been a good convention for them, and "one gambling house realized twenty-four thousands dollars clear profits"—in eleven days.

And in Baltimore, when they were not parading about the surging streets at night with bands, and insulting each other at simultaneous mass meetings in Monument Square—the northerners calling their southern colleagues traitors, bolters and disunionists, and the Yancey enthusiasts shouting that Mr. Douglas and his crew were "bankrupts in pocket and principle," liars, profligates, impostors, cowards and "men without honor or decency"—the delegates in the Front Street Theatre found themselves in a furious uproar because of what seemed to many of them to be a high-handed determination on the part of the Douglas forces to settle the contests over new delegations in their own favor. "It now seems," Mr. Johnson of Maryland exclaimed, "as if you were going to substitute a man in place of principle!"

The battle went on, with outcries and panics—as when the individual in the gallery hung his umbrella to dry over a lighted gas chandelier, terrifying an audience already made nervous by the earlier collapse of the entire front of the stage—and when the official

membership of the conclave, with its seemingly deliberate Douglas bias, was made known on June 22, for the second time in the history of this Democratic convention a pale gentleman stood on a chair and addressed the delegations. It was Virginia retiring from the convention—Virginia, soon to be followed by most of the remaining southern delegates and many, also, from the North.

"California," its spokesman announced, "is here with melancholy faces. California is here with a lacerated heart, bleeding and weeping over the downfall and destruction of the Democratic party . . . consummated by assassins now grinning upon this floor . . . There have been wrongs perpetrated upon the Democracy of that deep and damning character that it does not permit California longer to participate in the proceedings of this irregular organization." And Oregon was not far behind. "By your action today," it decided, "gentlemen as much entitled to seats as ourselves . . . are excluded from the floor. We . . . are conscious that a most grievous wrong and insult has been given to sovereign States. These States are the weak parties in this contest, and we have resolved to stand by them."

Once again, the Democratic national convention was split in two—and at Richmond men were watching.

Left to itself, the rump of the "rump convention" finally began to ballot, and on the second trial Mr.

Douglas—whose managers persistently suppressed until the decision had been reached his several private offers to withdraw for the sake of harmony—was declared nominated as having received two-thirds of the votes actually present. The vice-presidency having been refused by Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama, it remained for the National Committee to select Herschel Johnson of Georgia for the office.

And just at the end they found the courage to add a resolution to the platform—

"that it is in accordance with . . . the [1856] platform that, during the existence of the Territorial Governments, the measure of restriction, whatever it may be, imposed by the Federal Constitution on the power of the Territorial Legislature over the subject of the domestic relations, as the same has been, or shall hereafter be, finally determined by the Supreme Court . . . should be respected by all good citizens and enforced with promptness and fidelity by every branch of the general government."

Amen.

8

The delegates who had marched out of the Front Street Theatre—and with them a majority of the spectators—assembled at once in convention at the Maryland Institute; some twenty delegations, complete or fragmentary, including representatives from Iowa, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York.

"The convention assembled elsewhere," Mr. Russell of Virginia told them, "and from which you have withdrawn, has lost all title to the designation of national;" there, in the Institute hall, "all restraint of feeling had disappeared, and a spirit of the most cordial unanimity and harmony characterised every man and every feature."

They adopted the original Charleston majority resolutions, they nominated the Vice-President, John Breckinridge of Kentucky, and Joseph Lane of Oregon—nominations which the deferred Richmond convention immediately ratified—and then they called on Mr. Yancey who proclaimed that Mr. Douglas could rest beneath the grave of squatter sovereignty, and that "the storm clouds of faction have drifted away." And many of the delegates themselves began to drift away, for Mr. Yancey went on and on, and some of them were not so pleased when he announced himself to be—

"no worshipper at the shrine of the Union. I am no Union shrieker. I meet great questions fairly, on their merits. I do not try to drown the judgment of the people by shrieking for the Union. I am neither for the Union nor against the Union . . . I urge or oppose measures upon the ground of their constitutionality and wisdom or the reverse."

It was all over finally, after two distressing months, and Mr. Buchanan was in favor of Mr. Breckinridge,

"because he sanctions and sustains the perfect equality of all the States within their common Territories, and the opinion of the Supreme Court . . . establishing this equality." The situation seemed very simple to Mr. Buchanan.

"The people of the southern States," he explained, "can never abandon this great principle of State equality in the Union without self-degradation . . . What then have the North to do? Merely to say that . . . they will yield obedience to the decision of the Supreme Court and admit the right of a southern man to take his property into the Territories, and hold it there just as a northern man may do; and it is to me the most extraordinary thing in the world that this country should now be distracted and divided because certain persons at the North will not agree that their brethren at the South shall have the same rights in the Territories which they enjoy . . . Let [the] principle of [Congressional] non-intervention [with slavery] be extended to the Territorial Legislatures . . . and then the controversy is in effect ended . . . Hands off by Congress and hands off by the Territorial Legislature."

Mr. Buchanan was perfectly right, that was the odd part of it, and his optimism was incurable.

"Shall we," he asked, "for the sake of squatter sovereignty . . . incur the risk of dividing the great Democratic party of the country into two sectional

parties, the one North and the other South?" No—"I entertain no such fearful apprehensions. The present issue is transitory and will speedily pass away . . . should the time ever arrive when northern agitation and fanaticism shall proceed so far as to render the domestic firesides of the South insecure, then, and not till then, will the Union be in danger. A united Northern Democracy will present a wall of fire against such a catastrophe. There are in our midst numerous persons who predict the dissolution of the great Democratic party, and others who contend that it has already been dissolved. The wish is father to the thought . . . It will never die whilst the Constitution and the Union survive. It will live to protect and defend both."

9

Mr. Buchanan, in July, 1860, was very confident of the integrity of his Democratic party which was already sundered into northern and southern factions, and of the security of that Union which another six months were to dissolve. But in May, at Baltimore, some prudent gentlemen had assembled in convention who foresaw only peril for the Union. The Constitutional Union party, northerners and southerners—including the long haired delegate from Texas who had once wagered the growth of his beard on the election of Henry Clay to the presidency—everybody, as a reporter saw them—

"eminently respectable, intensely virtuous, devotedly patriotic and fully resolved to save the country. They propose to accomplish that . . . by ignoring all the rugged issues of the day."

A great speech making and cheering aggregation, prone to "virtuous twaddle," bent, some of them, on nominating that "rather good old soul," General Sam Houston, whose proceedings upon the adoption of their resolutions "were, in fact, a long yell." Resolutions stating that—

"it is both the part of patriotism and of duty to recognize no political principle other than the Constitution . . . the union of the States and the enforcement of the laws, and . . . we hereby pledge ourselves to maintain, protect and defend, separately and unitedly, these great principles of public liberty and national safety against all enemies at home and abroad."

Whereupon they nominated John Bell of Tennessee and Edward Everett of Massachusetts, the "ladies' candidate"—the "Kangaroo ticket," so called, "because the hinder part was stronger than the head" —and, with ladies showering him with bouquets, Mr. Hillard of Boston remarked that—

"you have this day done a good and glorious work. It will send a thrill of joy and hope all over the land . . . It [will] be felt . . . like the breeze from the

sea after a day of exhausted heat; like as a man at the poles who is languishing after the protracted darkness of an arctic winter feels, when he sees the first ruddy spark which tells him that the spring and summer is coming, so shall we at the North welcome the intelligence of this convention. As the greater part of creation waiteth for the manifestation of the Son of God, so all over the land will the true and patriotic citizens of America rise up and call you blessed."

In the meantime they held a ratification meeting in Monument Square, with an illuminated platform, and bands, and portraits of Washington and Clay—and in November Mr. Bell carried Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia.

10

Long before the Democrats were through, the Black Republicans had met, in Chicago, on May 16, and performed their historic business. In the specially constructed Wigwam, a plank edifice capable of accommodating ten thousand persons, a replica of the Crystal Palace at New York, in the open spaces surrounding which thousands more were enabled to assemble and give voice to their enthusiasms.

Chicago, with twenty-five thousand strangers in town, was a madhouse of dust, bands and champagne. Already on the trains—

"the number of private bottles [of whiskey] . . . was something surprising. A portion of the Republicans are distressed by what they see and hear of the disposition to use ardent spirits which appears in members of their supposed to be painfully virtuous party. And our Western Reserve was thrown into prayers and perspiration . . . by some New Yorkers who were singing songs not found in hymn books."

But then the New Yorkers were a gay lot who could

"drink as much whiskey, swear as loud and long, sing as bad songs and get up and howl as ferociously as any crowd of Democrats . . . At night those of them who are not engaged in caucusing are doing that which ill-tutored youths call raising hell generally."

They were at the Richmond House, with Mr. Weed, "Irrepressibles" ballyhooing for Mr. Seward whose nomination seemed inevitable this time—with their tremendous band all rigged out in feathers and epaulettes—while over at the more "Conservative" Tremont House, where fifteen hundred men were sitting down to breakfast, Mr. Greeley was shuffling about and being stared at, "as innocent as ever," impervious to the fact that the Seward men were calling him "a damned old ass."

Mr. Greeley was filling a vacancy from Oregon, and Mr. Greeley was very busy. Mr. Seward had refused to believe it when Julius Wood had warned him that "Greeley is cheating you; he will go to Chicago and work against you;" and the two men were still outwardly friendly, although the famous letter "dissolving the firm of Seward, Weed and Greeley," while not yet made public, had been written long before by Mr. Greeley—a break caused by Mr. Seward's failure to reward Mr. Greeley's services with political offices, since already in 1840, according to Mr. Greeley, "you, Governor Seward, ought to have asked that I be Postmaster of New York." But now Mr. Greeley was at Chicago, and very busy; nor was he to be found in the ranks of those who tramped the streets four by four, singing "Oh, isn't he a darling?" in honor of Mr. Seward.

And aside from Mr. Greeley's personal grievances, there was a very considerable political opposition to Mr. Seward. He was considered by some a radical, an extremist, on the slavery question; it was resented by others that he had taken no leading part in the Lecompton controversy; he was felt by many to be "an organ in the hands of the organ grinder, Thurlow Weed," and he was laughed at for his various "anti" movements, anti-rent, anti-Mason, anti-slavery. "Billy Seward and his three Aunties." He had, Senator Wilson explained to him—

"by your ability and long devotion to the anti-slavery cause, excited prejudices and awakened conservative fears in the great States of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, New Jersey and Connecticut, which are to be the battle ground of the contest."

Indeed, the Republican candidates for Governor in Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania were proclaiming that they might as well resign from the canvass in their respective States should Mr. Seward be nominated by the national convention.

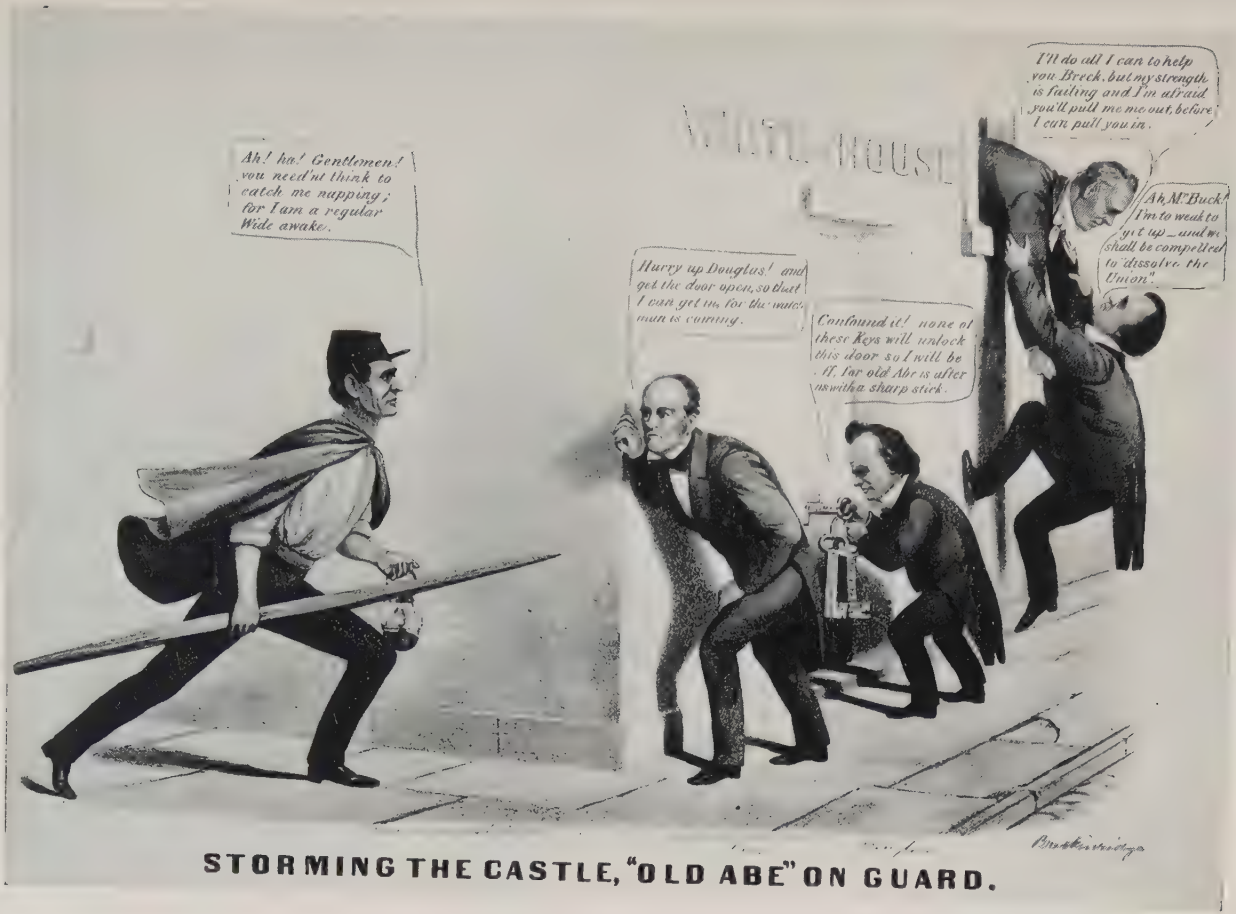
The Republicans were out to sweep the coming election, and the determination of several delegations to rid themselves of Mr. Seward for the sake of victory—"Success rather than Seward"—was equalled only by the obstinate self-assurance of the Seward men and of their leader. It was a solemn matter, everything was "solemn" at Chicago, and if one reporter present felt justified in recording that "the current of the universal twaddle . . . is that 'Old Abe' [Lincoln] will be the nominee," as a representative of conservatism, respectability, availability "and all that sort of thing," still to many minds the logical candidate upon whom to unite was "the man who can split rails and maul Democrats," the farmer lawyer of Illinois, the confuter of Mr. Douglas, the author of the Cooper Union speech.

He knew what they were planning; the taste for the presidency—that perilous presidency of 1860—

"*is* in my mouth a little," he confessed; Mrs. Lincoln wanted him to be President, she had foretold that he would be, and "if I had not thought so I would not have married him," she laughed, "for you can see he is not pretty." He was ready to try, and "our policy," he advised his friends, "is to give no offense to others —leave them in a mood to come to us if they shall be compelled to give up their first love." But he would not go to Chicago, for, if "I am a little too much a candidate to stay home," he was also "not quite enough a candidate to go."

But his friends went, and worked like beavers. "I authorize no bargains and will be bound by none," he had said, but Indiana was "nailed down" by promising "everything they asked;" Pennsylvania was secured "by paying their price" in Cabinet pledges; seats were provided for the white hatted Pennsylvanians between Illinois and Indiana in order to safeguard them against the blandishments of Mr. Weed, who was "a sly old fox;" and just before the convention opened they were writing to Mr. Lincoln that

"things are working. Keep a good nerve. We are laboring to make you the second choice of all the delegations we can, where we can't make you first choice. We are dealing tenderly with delegates, taking them in detail and making no fuss . . . Again, I say, brace your nerves for any result."


Ah! ha! Gentlemen! you need'nt think to catch me napping; for I am a regular Wide awake.
Hurry up Douglas! and get the door open, so that I can get in, for the white man is coming.
Continued it! none of these Keys will unlock this door so I will be off, for old Abe is after us with a sharp stick.
I'll do all I can to help you Breck, but my strength is failing and I'm afraid you'll pull me me out, before I can pull you in.
Ah, M.r Buck! I'm to weak to git up and we shall be compelled to "dissolve the Union".
STORMING THE CASTLE, "OLD ABE" ON GUARD.

STORMING THE CASTLE

From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection

He, for his part, was willing to be Vice-President; if they failed to make him President and thought it advisable.

11

The opening of the Wigwam doors saw a fearful rush into the amphitheatre, and into the galleries to which only gentlemen accompanied by ladies were admitted, so that—

"ladies to accompany gentlemen were in demand—school girls were found on the street and given a quarter each to see a gentleman safe in . . . An Irish woman passing with a bundle of clothes . . . was levied upon by an irrepressible, and seeing him safely into the [reserved] seats . . . retired with her fee and bundle. Another irrepressible sought out an Indian woman who was selling moccasins," but the policemen informed him "that she was no lady."

Credentials and resolutions precipitated vigorous polemics, and—

"there has not been in any previous Republican convention sharp shooting so keen, and sarcasm so bitter and incisive . . . We only occasionally hear the sentimental twang, the puritanic intonation that indicates the ancient and savory article of anti-slaveryism. The truth is the Republican party is rapidly becoming Democratized in its style of operations."

But when the resolutions were finally adopted, on the second day—

"all the thousands of men in that enormous Wigwam commenced swinging their hats and cheering . . . The roar that went up . . . was indescribable . . . A herd of buffaloes or lions could not have made a more tremendous roaring."

They presented various economic demands, internal improvements, a railroad to the Pacific; they condemned the Democratic Administration as subservient to sectional interests and extravagant in expenditure; they denounced the "lawless invasion by armed force" of any State or Territory as "the gravest of crimes"—their *amende honorable* for John Brown—they required the admission of Kansas as a free State. And they declared that—

"the new dogma that the Constitution, of its own force, carries slavery into any or all of the Territories . . . is a dangerous political heresy;" that "we brand the recent opening of the African slave trade under the cover of our national flag . . . as a crime against humanity and a burning shame to our country and age;" and that "the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom . . . and we deny the authority of Congress, of a Territorial Legislature, or of any individual to give legal existence to slavery in any Territory of the United States."

There it was; they were not concerned with property rights, with popular sovereignty, with Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution, and the challenge was flung at Charleston. Not violently enough perhaps, for the extreme Abolitionists who were to refer to Mr. Lincoln as "the slave hound of Illinois," but with sufficient clarity to alienate from a Republican victory any thought of southern acquiescence.

The delegations were in a ferment during that second night, prior to the nominating session, and the dawn found many gentlemen still hurrying from room to room, trafficking in solemnities. The Seward men, positive of the morrow's triumph, had—

"a champagne supper in their rooms at the Richmond House . . . and . . . bands of music serenading the various delegations . . . Three hundred bottles of champagne are said to have been cracked at the Richmond."

It looked like Seward, but the Lincoln managers were leaving no cork unpulled—they were even having special admission tickets signed, so that access to the Wigwam might be made possible for the army of "shouters" for whom they had procured reduced excursion rates on the railroads—and Mr. Greeley was shuffling about, shuffling about.

"Massachusetts was right in Weed's hands," he wrote afterwards. "It was all we could do to hold

Vermont . . . The rest of New England was pretty sound, but part of New Jersey was somehow inclined to sin against light and knowledge. If you had seen the Pennsylvania delegation, and known how much money Weed had in hand, you would not have believed we could do as well as we did . . . Ohio looked very bad, but turned out well, and Virginia had been regularly sold out; but the seller could not deliver. We had to rain red hot bolts on them, however, to keep the majority from going to Seward . . . Indiana was our right bower and Missouri above praise. It was a fearful week, such as I hope and trust I shall never see repeated."

The next morning the Seward men came swinging down to the Wigwam behind their "Oh isn't he a darling?" band; the Lincoln "shouters" went shoving into the galleries ahead of the New York "boys" who had been making all the noise during the first two days; and nominations were in order. Eight of them, but "everybody felt that the fight was between [Seward and Lincoln] and yelled accordingly." There was "absolutely terrific" applause for Mr. Lincoln's seconder, but when Mr. Seward's turn came

"the effect was startling. Hundreds of persons stopped their ears in pain. The shouting was absolutely frantic, shrill and wild. No Comanches . . . ever . . . gave screams with more infernal intensity. Looking from the stage . . . nothing was to be seen below but thousands of hats."

But the Lincoln "shouters" were not in the galleries for nothing, and—

"now the Lincoln men had to try it again, and . . . the uproar was beyond description. Imagine all the hogs ever slaughtered in Cincinnati giving their death squeals together, a score of big steam whistles going. . . . The Lincoln boys were clearly ahead and feeling their victory . . . and gave a concentrated shriek that was positively awful, and accompanied it with stamping that made every plank and pillar in the building quiver. . . . The New York, Michigan and Wisconsin delegations sat together, and . . . many of their faces whitened as the Lincoln yawp swelled into a hosanna of victory."

Down on the floor they were balloting, and on the first trial Mr. Seward had one hundred and seventy-three and a half, Mr. Lincoln one hundred and two. On the second ballot Mr. Seward had gained eleven votes and Mr. Lincoln seventy-nine, including the entire vote of Vermont, so that he was only three and a half votes behind Mr. Seward. "This was a blighting blow upon the Seward interest; the New Yorkers started as if an Orsini bomb had exploded"; and "it now dawned upon the multitude" that Mr. Seward was done. On the third ballot he had only one hundred and eighty, Mr. Lincoln two hundred and thirty-one and a half—one and a half less than the required number.

People were going crazy, Mr. Weed was shedding tears, and it was Mr. Medill of the Chicago *Tribune* who, according to Mr. Sandburg, turned to the Ohio delegation and promised them anything they cared to ask for Mr. Chase if they would change a sufficient number of their votes to clinch the Lincoln nomination. The Ohioans had four votes to contribute; "there was a moment's silence," then "there was a noise in the Wigwam like the rush of a great wind in the van of a storm—and in another breath the storm was there. There were thousands cheering with the energy of insanity." Abraham Lincoln was nominated.

The cannon on the roof was fired and the crowds outside began to yell; the sound of their roaring was added to the tumult within the hall, "and the shouting was repeated with such tremendous fury that some discharges of the cannon were absolutely not heard by those on the stage." State standards were being torn up—but not that of New York—hats were being smashed, men standing a few feet apart were screaming inaudibly at the top of their lungs.

Someone rushed out and telegraphed to Mr. Lincoln. "We did it, glory to God!"

12

Inside the Wigwam Mr. Evarts of New York was generously moving to make the nomination unanimous; Hannibal Hamlin of Maine was being chosen

as Vice-President; Carl Schurz was declaiming something about "defying the whole slave power and the whole vassalage of hell." Delegates were staggering around like drunken men, overwhelmed by the reaction of exhaustion; the Seward supporters were "terribly stricken down. They were mortified beyond all expression."

Mortified and furious. Horace Greeley was the man to blame—that "damned old ass" Greeley who had exclaimed "Now I am even with Governor Seward," and who was being cheered wherever he went because he had "slaughtered Seward and saved the party." He was the one they considered responsible for the selection of the "prairie statesman," and the Seward men, Mr. Seward himself, would not forgive him. "The past is dead," he was to write soon after. "Let the dead past bury it, and let its mourners, if they will, go about the streets." Yes, Mr. Weed retorted, and who were they, these mourners? They were "the rank and file, as well as the intelligence and patriotism of nearly every Republican State in the Union." And to others too it seemed "the triumph of a presumption of availability over pre-eminence in intellect and unrivaled fame."

It was, in other words, a fearful come down for Mr. Seward—the over-confident Mr. Seward who had declared that "if he was not nominated as the Republican candidate . . . at the . . . convention, he

would shake the dust off his shoes and retire from the service of an ungrateful party for the remainder of his days"—and Chicago was "wild with delight," crashing with bands, roaring with jubilation. One hundred guns were fired from the roof of the Tremont House, the Chicago *Tribune* office was illuminated, "the Old Abe men formed processions and bore rails through the streets," and "torrents of liquor were poured down the hoarse throats of the multitude."

Abraham Lincoln was nominated.

13

"A horrid looking wretch he is," the Charleston *Mercury* thought, "sooty and scoundrelly in aspect, a cross between the nutmeg dealer, the horse swapper and the night man. . . . He is a lanksided Yankee of the uncomeliest visage and of the dirtiest complexion. Faugh! After him what decent white man would be President?"

It was to be a violent campaign, without mercy on either side—in the South they would even have it that Mr. Hamlin was a mulatto—and already in April Senator Hammond of South Carolina was writing from Washington that—

"so far as I know . . . every man in both Houses is armed with a revolver, some with two, and a bowie knife. . . . Seeing the oldest and most conservative

senators . . . get revolvers, I most reluctantly got one myself."

And yet the slavery question was not exclusively emphasized, nor did the Black Republicans enlist the support of many radical Abolitionists. In the pivotal State of Pennsylvania the real issue was the protection tariff, and Republican ammunition in general was expended primarily in attacks upon the wasteful and corrupt character of the Buchanan Administration.

Attacks made possible by the findings of the Covode congressional investigating committee, established for the purpose, among others, of ascertaining

"whether the President . . . or any other officer of the government, has by money, patronage, or other improper means sought to influence the action of Congress . . . for or against the passage of any law,"

and of enquiring into the nature of alleged abuses in the postoffices and navy yards, and in the matter of moneys spent "to carry elections." And the Covode Report was not a pretty thing. Nearly a million dollars had been misspent on government printing contracts and in support of Administration newspapers; the Philadelphia and Brooklyn navy yards were sinkholes of political corruption; the Postoffice and War Departments were involved; and Mr. Buchanan's

personal awaredness of these conditions was implied in much of the testimony.

"I charge," one orator proclaimed—a Bell and Everett man, as it happened—"that Buchanan's is the most corrupt and profligate Administration ever known to this government since its organization; nay, that ours is the most corrupt government in the civilized world." To which Mr. Buchanan, in the midst of his official protestations, could only reply—in a private letter seeking the assistance of the New York *Herald*—that "if this dragooning can exist, the presidential office would be unworthy of the acceptance of a gentleman. . . . In performing my duties I have endeavored to be not only pure but unsuspected."

And pure he may have been, this elderly gentleman who was rapidly becoming a nonentity, but unsuspected he was not, and Administration ears were ringing with the Republican cry of "scoundrels and corruptionists!"

In other respects the campaign was colorful and noisy. Mass meetings, railsplitter emblems, rings and pins; transparencies, processions and torchlight parades, North and South they were marching. The Douglas Guards, the Little Giants, the Invincibles, the Ever Readys—"Cuba must be ours," "We want a statesman not a railsplitter as President"—and for the Republicans the famous Wide Awakes who had

set the fashion. Political marching clubs in military formation, these Wide Awakes, wearing glazed hats and oil cloth capes copied from the original black cambric coverings assumed on the spur of the moment by some marchers in Hartford in order to protect their clothes from the dripping torches. The costume had attracted attention, and the Hartford boys had been the first to adopt the substitute oil cloth garment in which they escorted Mr. Lincoln himself when he came, in March, to address them. And now the black caped Wide Awakes were everywhere, and the song—

> "Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
> Out of the wilderness, out of the wilderness,
> Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
> Down in Illinois!"

And since the North had military formations, the South must have them too; the Breckinridge Minute Men, with blue Nullification cockades on their hats; a secret society formed in every district of South Carolina, its members pledged to provide themselves with rifles and revolvers, and to march to Washington, if necessary, to prevent the inauguration of a Black Republican President. For, as a Georgian put it later—

"to talk of the settlement of this slavery question is folly; to talk of a compromise upon the subject of

slavery is worse than folly. . . . We will never submit to the inauguration of a Black Republican President."

14

If Mr. Lincoln were elected the South would secede. They would not believe it at the North; Mr. Seward, who was doing his pale duty with speeches by the Republican campaign, could be quite facetious about it, Mr. Greeley, before the event, quite composed and broadminded; but at the South they were not pretending.

When they looked at the Black Republican Abraham Lincoln, southerners saw only "the nigger in the woodpile" of his celebrated rail splitting. Mr. Lincoln was far from being an Abolitionist—much too far for the Abolitionists themselves—but when southerners read of his belief that "this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free" they saw in the words a determination to exterminate slavery, to destroy the South, in the speaker the concentration of abolitionism. Politically, intellectually and socially. It did not matter, the Richmond *Enquirer* was to say after the election, whether the South was to be "governed by a gentleman or ruled by a baboon," but with Abraham Lincoln "comes something worse than slang, rowdyism, brutality and all moral filth; something worse than all the rag and tag

of Western grog shops and Yankee factories"—with these "comes the daring and reckless leader of the Abolitionists."

The Democrats tried to offset his manifest strength; in the close northern States they contrived fusion tickets; Mr. Douglas, in September, proclaimed that "if the withdrawal of my name would tend to defeat Mr. Lincoln, I would this moment withdraw it;" but to an earlier proposal by Jefferson Davis that he withdraw—in company with Mr. Breckinridge and Mr. Bell who had already agreed to do so if a more suitable union candidate could be found—Mr. Douglas had replied that "the scheme proposed was impracticable because his friends . . . would join in the support of Lincoln rather than of any one who should supplant him."

Then, in October, after the Republican successes in Pennsylvania and Indiana, Mr. Douglas became genuinely alarmed. "Mr. Lincoln is the next President," he announced. "We must try to save the Union. I will go South." Unlike Mr. Lincoln, whose one plea had been that "you will kindly let me be silent," Mr. Douglas had been vigorously on the stump. Now he cancelled his engagements; the Union, he clearly saw, was in real danger; his own candidacy was no longer worth troubling about; Mr. Lincoln would certainly be elected and the South must

not secede. With courage, with patriotic energy, and with a final impulse of admirable unselfishness, Mr. Douglas travelled through Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia, speaking from his car platform, from balconies, anywhere and at any time, asserting that "I emphatically answer No!" when they asked him about secession. The Union, he thought, "would be safe under Mr. Lincoln, if it could be held together long enough for the development of his policy."

Mr. Douglas was possibly not the man to appeal to the South; he was only to carry one of the States in which he spoke, and that one by four hundred and twenty-nine votes over his closest opponent; as the Republican song had it—

"There was a little man and his name was Stevy Doug,
To the White House he longed for to go;
But he hadn't any votes in the whole of the South,
In the place where his votes ought to grow.
His legs were short, but his speeches they were long,
And nothing but himself he could see;
His principles were weak, but his spirits they were strong,
For a thirsty little soul was he."

If Mr. Lincoln had been willing to clarify his future intentions, perhaps something could have been done. Probably not. They went to the polls, and Mr. Lincoln was elected.

I assure you my friend, that you can safely vote our ticket for we have no connection with the Abolition party, but our Platform is composed entirely of rails, split by our Candidate.
It's no use old fellow! you cant pull that wool over my eyes, for I can see the Nigger peeping through the rails.
Little did I think when I split these rails, that they would be the means of elevating me to my present position.
REPUBLICAN PLATFORM
"THE NIGGER" IN THE WOODPILE.

THE NIGGER IN THE WOODPILE

From a contemporary cartoon. Courtesy of the Harry MacNeill Bland Lincoln Collection

15

With the vote of South Carolina unrecorded, he had not quite two million popular votes, as against nearly three million for his three rivals. Of these, Mr. Douglas was still well in the lead, although in the Electoral count he only secured twelve votes, from two States. Mr. Breckinridge had seventy-two, from eleven States, Mr. Bell thirty-nine, from three States. But Mr. Lincoln's minority popular vote brought him one hundred and eighty Electoral ballots—eighty-five of them from Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania alone—with not a single popular vote in ten States, not an Electoral vote in fifteen.

The South could say that he was a minority, sectional President; and yet, while a Democratic fusion would have overwhelmed Mr. Lincoln in the popular vote, the Electoral difference would have been negligible, seven votes, from two States. Only a change in the vote cast by the Northwest—a not very considerable change from Mr. Lincoln to Mr. Douglas—could have thrown the election into the House—where no one knows what might have happened, for, as it was, they thought it best to guard Congress with troops during the official count. The committee instructed to wait upon Mr. Lincoln might be directed, so Mr. Hindman of Arkansas thought at the close of the ceremony, "to inform General Scott that there is no further need for his janizaries about the Capitol."

The tar barrels were blazing all over the North; everywhere a song was booming—

> "Oh ain't I glad I joined the Republicans,
> Joined the Republicans, joined the Republicans,
> Ain't I glad I joined the Republicans,
> Down in Illinois!"

Down in Charleston they were leaving the Union, as a matter of course. They had watched the returns on November 7, and as soon as the result was known the Collector and the Surveyor of the Port, the Judge of the United States District Court and the United States District Attorney resigned; the Grand Jury reported that the Federal authority had ceased in South Carolina; the Postmaster and the Navy Agent announced their unwillingness to serve under a Republican administration; crowds in the streets were cheering a red flag with a palmetto and a star; out in the harbor salutes were being fired.

It was done officially on December 20, in St. Andrew's Hall. Resolved, that "the Union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved." The Ordinance of Secession. There were crowds again and processions, guns, bands and illuminations. In the midst of it all someone began to play *Auld Lang Syne* on the bells of St. Michael's.

And Mr. Buchanan had his warning. "South Carolina, I have not a doubt will go out of the Union," Mr. Rhett had written to him on November 24.

"And it is in your power to make this event peaceful or bloody. *If you send any more troops into Charleston Bay, it will be bloody.* Now, in giving you this information and opinion, I trust you will not suppose that I intend to *direct* your judgment as to your course of duty, but simply to *inform* it. If you have any hopes of reconstructing the Union, after South Carolina shall have seceded, they will, in my judgment, be utterly defeated by any demonstration of coercion in the Bay of Charleston."

But on December 26—in defiance of verbal assurances apparently given by Mr. Buchanan to the South Carolinian commissioners who had come to Washington to treat for the delivery to the State of the Charleston forts—the Federal commander in the Bay abandoned Fort Moultrie and threw himself into the more powerful fortress of Sumter. Mr. Buchanan did not order him back to Moultrie—there would have been too many northern resignations in Washington; Mr. Buchanan, in January, allowed a ship to be sent to Charleston with reinforcements and supplies, and guns were fired to drive her away—but the resignations that followed were those of southerners only; Mr. Buchanan was "pale with fear" these days, and

divided his time "between praying and crying;" Mr. Buchanan complained to the South Carolinians that "you don't give me time to say my prayers; I always say my prayers when required to act upon any great state affairs;" Mr. Buchanan was a pitiful figure, afraid of the South, terrified of the North, and to his enemies it seemed that "such a perfect imbecile never held office before."

On March 4, 1861, Mr. Buchanan was no longer even a figure. Mr. Lincoln was there—and of him, during the last months, many men had been mistakenly thinking that he was a "Simple Susan" with his absurd optimism, his "there is no crisis but an artificial one . . . there is nothing going wrong"— and with Mr. Lincoln there came Mr. Douglas, to stand with him sectionally on his inaugural platform and hold his hat; and Mr. Chase of Ohio as Secretary of the Treasury, that post which had been so diligently promised by Mr. Lincoln's convention managers; and Mr. Seward as Secretary of State, an office which for some weeks he evidently confused with that of Prime Minister, or even Chief Magistrate. And because Mr. Lincoln, in Mr. Seward's estimation, had not seemed to know what it was that he had to do, Mr. Seward undertook, for a while, to do it for him. And Mr. Seward would have peace with the South and save the country, he would surrender Sumter, he would prevent any Federal expedition for the relief

of the fort. Mr. Seward so led the South Carolinian commissioners to believe.

But Mr. Seward did none of these things; Mr. Lincoln remained in control of his own Administration; and in April the Bay of Charleston was roaring with guns which might perhaps have been kept silent. A peaceably intended retirement from a Union become inexpressibly irksome must first run the gauntlet of bayonets. So, in 1861, it was decided. Mr. Douglas came to the White House; Mr. Douglas went away.

"There can be no neutrals in this war," the author of popular sovereignty proclaimed; "only patriots or traitors."

Soon afterwards he died.

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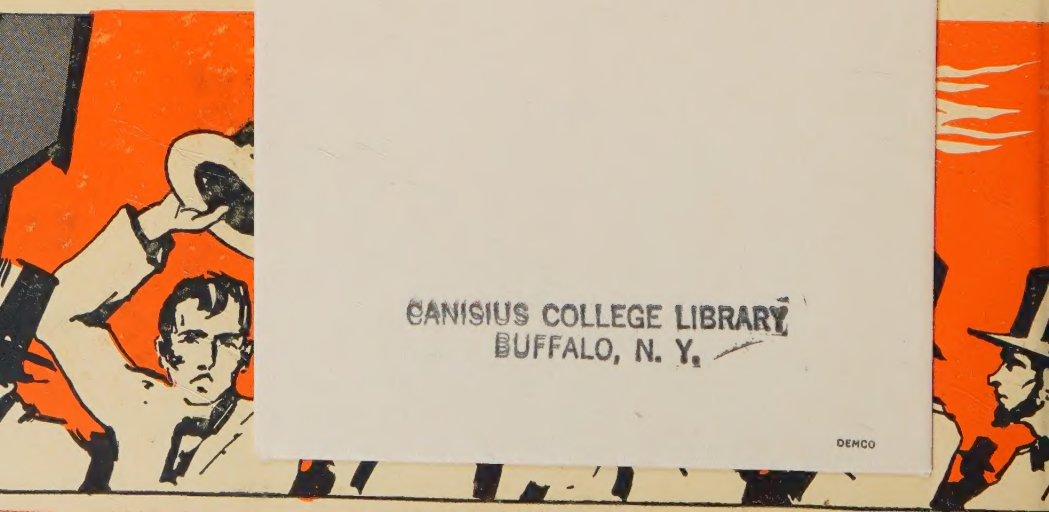
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